

"I MAGNIFY MY OFFICE"

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." Romans 11:13

Thus spoke the greatest man of his day. He was declaring his life's purpose. He summarized and epitomized all his life and work in this statement.

There is a holy enthusiasm about this man Paul. He never did things half-way; he was never a neutral, never a negative force. His was a most positive character. He was always willing to go the second mile. As a student under the great Gamaliel he excelled; as a Pharisee he was zealous of the law; as a Roman he asserted his citizenship; as a Christian he was a devoted enthusiast; as a missionary he was world-wide in his vision; and as an apostle he was the greatest of them all. Always, in every sphere of activity, in varied labors, in many lands, under strange conditions, he could say with enthusiasm: "I magnify my office."

At Ephesus, where he was thrown into the arena; at Athens, where his message was misunderstood; in Galatia, when opposition threatened; in Corinth, the most wicked city of the world; in Thessalonica and Rome and everywhere his ministry carried him he could say: "I magnify my office." On board ship sailing unknown seas; shipwrecked and thrown upon an unknown island; in busy crowded streets; on lonely highways; speaking to rulers in strange nations, he could always say: "I magnify my office."

Even when beaten with rods; or stones; or stranded in the sea or in prison; or with stripes above measure; or even facing death; he could declare: "I magnify my office." In world-wide travels; in perils and labors; watching and dangers; in all the strange experiences which came to him, he could yet say: "I magnify my office." What a glorious statement for a man to be able to make; what a splendid declaration to be able to utter.

Take, for example, some of the great words spoken by him to the churches and to his friends, and read in them all this mighty purpose of his heart. "This one thing I do." Here again is his firm purpose and determination to magnify his Christian office. It means the subjection of self, the control of heart and mind, the driving passion of his life. Listen to him again: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Here is the enthronement of Christ, the enrichment of life, the indwelling of the divine, until his own life is charged with the current of Christ's power. Hear his words to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Here is fitness in service, expertness in endeavor, credit in life, and a challenge to preparedness. There is always a fine note of regal sincerity and genuineness, of truth and honor, or glory and greatness in the declaration of his life's purpose. With him spiritual life and Christian character were not used simply to accomplish some human end. His office was the one big thing in his life. He fought for it and died for it.

Let us think of two great Americans who opposed each other before the people. They belonged to different political parties; each of them refused to play at statesmanship and public service; each could say "I am magnifying my office." However, we may think of Theodore Roosevelt and William Jennings Bryan, we must always admire the tenacity of purpose, the genuineness of character, and the honor and truth in these men that lifted them high in the public estimation. Or think of Livingstone, that lonely man in the wilds of Africa, alone and yet not alone, destitute but not needy, wasted by disease but undaunted, refusing offers and pleas to return home to a life of comfort and ease, and at last dying for the Africa he had labored to win to Christ. Or think of young Pitkin in China

in the days of the Boxers, glorifying Christ by a wonderful ministry, in untiring service, by splendid heroism and at last by a martyr's death. Jesus Christ, revealer of God's love and redemption, Saviour of mankind, and the one who atoned for sin, magnified his office in his life and in his death. Likewise, he could say: "I magnify my office."

Such a declaration speaks the language of hope, keeps faith with the heart, and marches with the tread of a triumphant victor. Such a purpose tempts men to launch out into the deep of Christian experience; and lures men to endeavor great heroics, and challenges men to do their best. This is the standard of the christian religion; it is the challenge of a supreme excellence; it is a royal motto appropriate for a devoted heart. It must not be confused with simply profession. It is easy to profess creeds and declare affirmation to doctrines, but it is a different matter to live the creed and practice the doctrine. Simple profession demands no sacrifice, involves no service, requires no hardships, and demands no Golgotha.

It must not be confused with aspiration. It is fine to aspire to holy living and great to dream of high deeds, but contentment with aspiration does not lead to heroic endeavors nor enriched consecration. It does not necessarily involve action or determination or purpose.

It must not be measured by words. Words are cheap things, easily spoken and heedlessly uttered. Back of every word stands a life that endorses or condemns every spoken word. Many say they are Christian, but their lives discount their declaration. Many say they are making sacrifices for the sake of the kingdom, but their deeds and gifts and lives refute their words. Paul was not content to live such a life. His life was geared to the highest power that ever drove a human life.

1. This attitude helped Paul to endure.

Think back into his varied experiences as a prisoner, shipwrecked, stoned, beaten, mistreated, yet enduring it all because it was the way of the cross and through it all he was declaring his gospel and proclaiming his faith. He was magnifying his office for the Christ. He was giving his life for Christ who died for him.

2. This attitude helped Paul to achieve.

It was this great conviction that so completely filled Paul's heart and made him confident that he could "do all things through Christ who strengtheneth" him. It seemed that he was never weary, never ready to rest and never willing to surrender. That was because of this undying, unconquerable spirit of achievement and his passion to magnify his office. Paul was not thinking of personal profit, but was trying to enlarge the kingdom and to this task he gave the best of his life. You can live a Christian life in a glorious way or you can live it shabbily. You can fulfill life's purposes or you can refuse them. Paul was not content to be any thing less than the best within his reach; he was not content to do less than all he could. He was determined not to be a disappointment to his Master.

3. This attitude is a mighty stimulus in Christian life.

It is the pronouncement of a great life purpose. Purpose gives a new meaning to life. It is purpose that lies behind every worthwhile endeavor. It has built the bridges that span the streams, erected lofty buildings that tower toward the heavens, and dug mines and scaled mountain tops. It is the basis of all missionary endeavor, and every Christian endeavor against sin. It is a dynamic and creative force without which no success is ever attained. It makes men masters and victors.

As then, so now, God needs men and women lovingly, loyally, devoted to Him, willing to magnify the office of a Christian in service for the redemption of mankind.

I. Every Christian Has An Office.

An office is a special duty, trust or position conferred by authority for a definite purpose. In the case of a religious office, the trust is sacred and God Himself confers it. While it is the privilege of every Christian to tell the story of the cross and to aid in the dissemination of the gospel, let it never be forgotten that God has called a special class and committed unto them certain duties.

II. Every Christian Should Magnify His Office.

1. Because of Him who appoints to the office.

The dignity of every office is measured largely by the dignity of the appointing power. To receive a commission from an illustrious sovereign lends dignity to a task, and it is this thought of a divine mission which has upheld many a hero at his post of toil and peril. In the great house of God vessels of every capacity and form of texture are needed, and whilst we may covet the best gifts and the noblest service, no department is despicable. In other words, all work to which God has appointed us is honorable.

2. Because of the importance of the work to be done.

Working for the salvation of others cannot be too highly esteemed. Our work as Christians is divided into two distinct parts -- reconciliation and edification. We must work for the reconciliation of sinners to God and the upbuilding of the reconciled in the most holy faith. How awful the responsibility, how solemn the obligation, how important the service of carrying to the unsaved the word and hope of eternal life. They are without God and hope in the world. They are heirs to an inheritance of despair. We can bring them sight for blindness, light for darkness, forgiveness for guilt, hope for despair, and a heavenly inheritance for spiritual bankruptcy.

(1) This work affords great opportunities.

a. To deal with life.

You are not working with material things only, but molding and shaping life.

b. To win the confidence and love of others.

c. To teach the Word of God.

d. To win the lost to Christ.

e. To develop character.

f. To inspire others.

Impressions made then will never be erased.

(2) This work involves great responsibilities.

a. You are responsible for your life.

b. You are responsible for your example.

(a) It will destroy or substantiate your teaching.

(b) It means more than what you teach.

(c) Actions speak louder than words.

(d) Pupils will follow your example.

c. You are responsible for your teaching.

- (a) You can't teach more than you know.
- (b) You don't know anything except what you learn.
- (c) You can't know what you should learn without study.

- d. You are responsible for your influence.
Influence can never be destroyed or buried with one.

III. Every Christian Can Magnify His Office.

1. By realizing its importance.

Those who realize the importance of their offices do their best work. They freely devote the necessary thought, time and energy to the efficient discharge of their duties. With them it becomes a labor of love. However, it is the office, and not the holder, which is to be magnified.

2. By fully appreciating it.

The fact that God has placed you in the office of a Christian should unseal a ceaselessly flowing fountain of gratitude to Him.

3. By living in fellowship with Christ.

You may not be able to know the full and rich experiences of divine grace and power that so greatly enlarge Paul's life, but you can say with him, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." You may not be able to explore the depths of divine power and the heights of divine love and the lengths of divine grace as Paul did, but you can "know Him and the power of His resurrection." And, you, too, can say: "for me to live is Christ."

4. By faithfully filling it.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." He does not demand of us the brilliance of Paul, but his faithfulness. He does not demand of us the labors of Paul, but faithfulness in the labors to which He calls us. He does not demand of us the sufferings of Paul, but faithfulness in our trials: "For unto some of us it is given not only to believe on Him but to suffer for His sake." Never do you hear Paul praying for wings to fly away, but often for faith and grace to endure. Never do you see Paul with cowardice running away from duties and calls but courageously and faithfully following the gleam. Never do you see in Paul the selfishness that complains of his hard lot, but often the faith that overcomes and the grace that triumphs. If we will only faithfully fill our offices as Christians our service will be appreciated and rewarded.