

MAGNIFYING YOUR OFFICE

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

Paul declared his life purpose when he said, "I magnify my office." In these four words the greatest man of his day and the greatest Christian of the ages summarized his life and work.

There was a holy enthusiasm about Paul. He never did things half-way. He was neither a neutral nor a negative force. His character was very positive. As a student under the great Gamaliel Paul excelled; as a Pharisee he was jealous 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. Under strange conditions, in many lands, in varied labors and in every sphere of activity Paul could say with enthusiasm: "I magnify my office."

Not only at Ephesus, where his message was misunderstood and Paul was thrown into the arena, but also in Galatia where opposition threatened; in Corinth, the most wicked city of the world; in Thessalonica and Rome and everywhere his ministry carried him, Paul could say truthfully, "I magnify my office."

Even when Paul was stoned, or beaten with rods, or stranded on the sea, or incarcerated in prison, or was facing death, he could declare: "I magnify my office." In world-wide travels, in perils and labors, in watching and dangers and in all the strange experiences which came to him he could always 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!

You can read this mighty purpose of the apostle's heart in many of the great words that were spoken or written by him and sent to his fellow Christians in the various churches. His firm purpose and determination to magnify his Christian office can be seen in his statement, "This one thing I do." That involved the subjection of self and the Lordship of Christ. On another occasion Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As the result of Paul's enthronement of Christ, he experienced the enrichment of life to a remarkable degree. Listen to his words of admonition to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." Thus he charged his son in the ministry to preparedness, to fitness in service, to expertness in endeavor and to credit in life.

Two great Americans refused to play at statesmanship and public service, so each of them could say with Paul, "I magnify my office." Regardless of what you may think of these men -- Theodore Roosevelt and William Jennings Bryan -- I shall always admire their genuineness of character, tenacity of purpose and fidelity in service which lifted them high in the estimation of the public. Think of David 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 urgent appeals to return home to a life of comfort and ease, but who at last died in and for the Africa which he had labored to win to Christ. Think of young Pitkin in China during the days of the Boxer Rebellion, glorifying Christ by a wonderful ministry, a splendid heroism, an untiring service and a martyr's death. Even Christ Jesus magnified his office in his life and in his death.

This declaration, "I magnify my office," speaks the language of hope, keeps faith with the heart, and marches with the tread of a triumphant victor. Such a purpose should influence men to launch out into the deep of Christian experience, to attempt heroic exploits for God, and to do their very best. This is the standard of the Christian religion. It is the challenge to a supreme excellence. It is a royal motto which is appropriate for any devoted heart. However, this must not be confused with a simple profession. It is easy to make a profession and to declare an affirmation to doctrines, but it is a different matter to live and practice accordingly. Simple profession does not demand any sacrifice, involve any service, require any hardships or demand a Golgotha. Neither must this 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, to an enriched life or to great achievements. It does not even necessarily involve purpose, determination or action.

Many say they are making sacrifices for the sake of the cause of Christ, but their lives, gifts and deeds refute their words. Paul was not willing to live such a life. His life was geared to the highest power that ever controlled a human being. He said, "I magnify my office."

This attitude helped Paul to endure. Think back over his varied experiences as a prisoner; also when he was shipwrecked, stoned, beaten and mistreated. Yet he endured it all because it was the way through which he could magnify his office and proclaim the gospel of Christ. Paul gave his life for Christ Who died for him.

This attitude also helped Paul to achieve. This great dedication to his task made Paul confident that he could "do all things through Christ who strengtheneth" him. It seemed that he was never ready to rest nor willing to surrender. He simply had an undying passion to magnify his office. Paul was not thinking of personal profit, but was trying to propagate the gospel of Christ, and to this glorious task he gave the best that he had. He was not willing to be less than the best within his reach, or to do less than all he could.

Such a purpose and determination is a mighty stimulus in the life of any Christian. After all, 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 scaled the mountain tops. Purpose is the basis of all missionary endeavor. It is a dynamic and creative force without which success can never be attainable.

Just as in Paul's day, so now God needs men who are lovingly, devotedly and loyally devoted to Him to the extent that they are willing and ready to magnify the office of a Christian in service for the glory of Christ and the salvation of others.

Every Christian has an office to fill. An office is a special trust, position or duty which is conferred by authority for a definite purpose. Every Christian should magnify his office. He should do so because of Him Who has appointed him to that service. 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. The child of God should magnify his office because of the importance of the work to be done. The work of Christians consists of two parts -- reconciliation and edification. It affords great opportunities and involves great responsibilities.

Each Christian can magnify his office by realizing its importance, fully appreciating it, living in close fellowship with Christ, and faithfully filling his position of trust, honor and service. Our Lord will appreciate and reward those who faithfully fill their offices.

This is certainly true of you who have been elected to serve as deacons in this church for the next four years. The word "deacon" means a servant. The deaconship involves the idea of service. Your election to this important office is distinctly a call to serve our Lord through our church. Your office is not just a post of honor, but rather it is a medium of service. I hope that you will be good men, loyal to Christ and faithful to the church.

God's Word teaches that you should be men of Christian character, good reputation -- "men of honest report", genuine piety -- "full of the Holy Spirit," wisdom -- "full of Wisdom," sound judgment, exemplary deportment -- serious-minded ("be grave"), truthful ("not double tongued"), sober ("not given to much wine"), lacking in covetousness ("not greedy of filthy lucre"), orthodox ("holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience"), not a polygamist ("husband of one wife"), blameless --, tact and vision.

There are some things which you should do, according to the teaching of the Scriptures. You should grow as a Christian through Bible study, prayer and public worship, help fill the church pews, care for the sick and needy, enlist the unenlisted, greet visitors, help create a good fellowship, look after the church finances, give some time to the church, be willing to do disagreeable tasks, and do your best.

For this type of service your reward will be the consciousness of a task well done, the appreciation of your pastor and people, joy over helpful service rendered, another opportunity for similar service in the future, the blessings of our Lord upon you and your efforts, and a crown of glory.

I appeal to you to be good and faithful deacons. As such do your very best for your own sake, for the sake of others, for the sake of the church, and for the sake of Christ. Do not go to the places where you would not want your pastor to go, and do the things you would not want to see him do. Do not bring reproach upon the church and cause it to be criticized because of what you do. Just live as both the faithful Christians and the unsaved know that you ought to live.