

Walking as a Servant

John 13:3-5 HCSB Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into His hands, that He had come from God, and that He was going back to God. (4) So He got up from supper, laid aside His robe, took a towel, and tied it around Himself. (5) Next, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around Him.
Philippians 2:5 HCSB Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus,

1. God demands our spiritual service

- **Exodus 23:25-26 HCSB** Worship the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. I will take away your illnesses. (26) No woman will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give *you* the full number of your days.

Some in the “health and wealth” camp of theology who would like to promise you “Your Best Life Now” would point to these promises and crow “See? If you would only have sufficient faith (and \$19.95 to buy my book) you would never be sick, your woman will get pregnant and never miscarry and you would live a long life!”

Never mind the many saintly women and wives of saints who struggled with infertility in the Bible. Never mind the many that were specifically praised for their faith in Hebrews 11 who suffered, struggled, and starved. God is no bubble gum machine. You cannot insert x amount of faith and pop! Out comes your wish. There are no genie bottles to rub. There are no magic caves to which we can cry “Open Sesame” and gain access to unfathomable wealth.

There are two things that must be considered here. First, the promise was to a specific people at a specific time. How do we know? Consider the very next two verses:

- **Exodus 23:27-28 HCSB** "I will cause the people ahead of you to feel terror and throw into confusion all the nations you come to. I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you in retreat. (28) I will send the hornet in front of you, and it will drive the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites away from you.

The second is that there is an overall principle that we must take from this passage. The implication is that when Adonai's people obey Him and walk in His ways, they will be a happy people. God will look after them. They may struggle. They may not. They may be poor or they may be wealthy. In either case, Hashem will have lessons for them to learn and grace upon which they must lean.

Nevertheless, we are left with one unalterable command: “Worship the Lord your God.” We must do this regardless of the outcome. We are the clay and He is the Potter. We are the slaves and He is the Master. We are the children and He is the Father. We are the building blocks and He is the Cornerstone. Over and over we are given the impression that we must humble ourselves under His mighty hand. We are to give Him our spiritual service. To paraphrase Moses, Joshua and David:

*"And now, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Therefore, fear the LORD and worship Him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your ancestors worshiped, and worship the LORD. Serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands the intention of every thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever."*¹

He does not ask much of us. He understands our simplicity and keeps our orders simple. Fear the Lord. Walk in His ways. Love Him. Worship Him sincerely and honestly. Set aside all

¹ Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 24:14; 1 Chronicles 28:9

other priorities in favor of His. Serve Him wholeheartedly and gratefully. Do these things or be rejected. Though He is a benevolent King, He remains God Almighty. He is our sovereign. Do you have a choice? Absolutely. Choose the Source of Life and Light and live. Choose to turn your back on Him and receive your just reward, death and darkness.

- **Psalms 2:11-12 HCSB** Serve the LORD with reverential awe, and rejoice with trembling. (12) Pay homage to the Son, or He will be angry, and you will perish in your rebellion, for His anger may ignite at any moment. All those who take refuge in Him are happy.

There are far too many people who seek to serve the Lord glibly. They think that Yahweh Adonai will be pleased if they simply show up; if they simply warm a seat; if they simply drop a token dollar in the offering. No! We are commanded to not only serve Him but to do so with “kavanah” with reverential awe marked by both joy and trembling.

Whence the joy? We should rejoice at the tremendous privilege of serving the King of kings.

Whence the trembling? We stand in the presence of the One who can cast us both body and soul into an eternal lake of fire!

- **Psalms 100:2-4 HCSB** Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. (3) Acknowledge that the LORD is God. He made us, and we are His--His people, the sheep of His pasture. (4) Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name.

Many do not want to acknowledge their “sheeply” status. Sheep stink! They suffer from near-terminal stupidity! Yet, the recognition of this fact about ourselves brings with it the great hope that we have a Divine Shepherd. We may be stupid but we have an infinitely wise, unerring Shepherd. To acknowledge that He made us is to realize that He has a vested interest in us and that He has our good at heart. So, give thanks to Him. Go past the gates and on into the courts. Don’t be one of those folks who barely make it past the church door, sit on the edge of a back seat and move out of the door at a warp speed afterwards. Don’t linger at the gates of God’s house! Move on into the courts! Make yourselves at home. Serve Him there. Love His family and make yourself useful!

- **1 Corinthians 15:58 HCSB** Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

We should excel in the Lord’s work. We should strive to do our best every time. We should be perfectionists. Every time we are up to bat we should be seeking ways to improve our game. Why? Because we want to impress the world? Absolutely! Our purpose should not, however, be that we want their praise for our ministry or our name. We want to impress them with our great God. Further, we want to impress God with our unimpeachable love for Him. We want to demonstrate just how grateful we are for what He has done for us. That’s why Paul told the Ephesians

- **Ephesians 6:7 HCSB** Render service with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men,

Going back to 1 Corinthians 15:58, look at the second half of the verse. He says “...*knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*” People take their jobs and careers so seriously! They identify themselves by what they do out there in the world. In contrast, the Apostle Paul tells us that it is our labor in the Lord that is not vain. It is only when we dedicate what we do out there to the Lord, when we do it in His name, when we do it His way, and we allow it to benefit His kingdom that there are true, lasting results!

- **Hebrews 12:28-29 HCSB** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us hold on to grace. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe; (29) for our God is a consuming fire.

2. Our service is to be rendered to Christ

- **John 12:26 HCSB** If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Jesus defined following Him as serving Him, as being His servant. We modern Americans don't like to be referred to as anyone's slave but Jesus promised that those who accept, not just the moniker but the responsibilities of divine slaves, will be honored by the Father.

- **Philippians 1:1 HCSB** Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

Paul and Timothy gladly referred to themselves as slaves of Christ Jesus. They understood what an honor that was.

- **Ephesians 6:6 HCSB** Don't *work only* while being watched, in order to please men, but as slaves of Christ, do God's will from your heart.

They encouraged the saints to understand the implications of being Christ's slaves. They pointed out the very practical application of this concept. That means we are NEVER out of the sight of our Master. Whether our human bosses are around or not is irrelevant. Our true Master sees and evaluates the thoughts and intents of our hearts, day and night, seven days a week.

- **1 Corinthians 7:22 HCSB** For he who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called as a free man is Christ's slave.

To be the Lord's slave is to be truly free. Don't be fooled. Everyone serves someone or something. We are all slaves. Some of us are slaves to our addictions. Some of us are slaves to our pride. Some of us are slaves to our families or our jobs. All of these come with potential damage to our spirits and souls. Those who deliberately choose the title of "servant of God" will discover that there is no eternal downside to the choice.

- **Colossians 3:24 HCSB** knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord--you serve the Lord Christ.

3. The benefits of worshiping God by serving men

a. It ennobles life

- **Mark 10:43-44 HCSB** But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all.

b. It models neighborliness

- **Luke 10:36-37 HCSB** "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" (37) "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

c. It is Christ-like

- **John 13:14 HCSB** So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

d. It demonstrates love

- **John 21:16 HCSB** A second time He asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord," he said to Him, "You know that I love You." "Shepherd My sheep," He told him.
- **Galatians 5:13 HCSB** For you are called to freedom, brothers; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.

e. It lightens life's burdens

- **Galatians 6:2 HCSB** Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

If we want to truly serve our Master, we need to carry one another's burdens. If we actually viewed this, not as a beautiful metaphorical statement but as the wonderfully practical strategy it truly is, we would have no need for government. We would have no need for socialistic, cradle-to-the-grave, intrusive government. We would not need social security. We would not need welfare. Each family would care for its own. Each church would care for its own. How much more efficient would that system be! How much less wastage and fraud would there be when the givers can look into the eyes of and know the quality of life of those who are on the receiving end!

- **Galatians 6:5 HCSB** For each person will have to carry his own load.

Which is it? Carry one another's or each carry their own? Both. The principle taught here is that each should do what they can every day. A man who will not work should not be allowed to eat.² No moochers allowed among God's children! However, when life circumstances are so overwhelming, when they swell and strain and burst the dykes of our life, then our genetic and spiritual families should help us spread the load and carry us through those hard times.

As Quotheth taught in the book of Ecclesiastes,

- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 HCSB** Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. (10) For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. (11) Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? (12) And if somebody overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

In closing, let's briefly examine some overarching principles involved in "walking as a servant".

- **2 Corinthians 8:1-5 HCSB** We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God granted to the churches of Macedonia: (2) during a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity. (3) I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability, (4) they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, (5) and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God's will.
- **2 Corinthians 8:12-14 HCSB** For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. (13) It is not that there may be relief for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality-- (14) at the present time your surplus is *available* for their need, so that their abundance may also become *available* for your need, that there may be equality.

Derashot:

1. Regard service as a grace granted by God. (v.1)
2. Serve even when you are going through hard times. (v.2)
3. Allow your gratitude and joy to be demonstrated through generosity. (v.3)
4. Be willing to even go a little beyond what you think your limits are. (v.3)
5. Volunteer! Look for opportunities. Don't be one of those who must be dragged to it kicking and screaming! (v.4)
6. Recognize that your service or your offerings are a gift to God. (v.5)

² 2 Thessalonians 3:8

7. Understand that giving one's self to God entails giving one's self to fellow humans. (v.5)
8. Do not give to the point where you are injured. (vv. 12-13)
 - a. You must still pay your bills.
 - b. You must still pay your taxes.
 - c. You must still care for your family.
 - d. You must still care for your aged.
 - e. You must still spend quality time with your loved ones.
 - f. You must still have love left over and attention to spend on your spouse!
9. Aim for equality in all things. Don't be perpetually on the receiving end of the church but don't burn yourself out on the giving end either. (v.13)
10. Be willing to allow others to serve you. To deny their service to you is to deny their service to God. (v.14)