

The Greatness of Being a Slave

Scripture: Mark 10:35–45

Code: 41-54

Open your Bible to Mark chapter 10 verses 35 through 45, next to the last section in chapter 10 and tonight we'll wrap it up in the final section. This message in verses 35 to 45 may seem a little bit like an echo because our Lord is working on communicating a very important spiritual truth to His disciples and they are fighting against it, resisting what He is endeavoring to teach.

We really would almost start our understanding of this section by going back to chapter 9 for a moment and verse 33. Still at the end of the ministry in Galilee, they came to Capernaum. He was in the house and He began to question them...what were you discussing on the way? But they kept silent for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. "Sitting down He called the Twelve and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.'"

Just a few weeks ago when we talked about that, and it's just a few weeks later in the life of our Lord and His disciples as they are about to enter in to Jerusalem for His death and resurrection that the subject is addressed again. And I hate to tell you, but this won't be the last time either. The subject will come up during the Passion Week. It will still be on their minds when they are at the Last Supper, the night of our Lord's betrayal. Luke 22:24, "There arose a dispute among them as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest. And He said to them, 'The king of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are called benefactors, but it is not this way with you that the one who is the greatest among you must become like the least and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table, but I am among you as one who serves.'"

At the end of the ministry in Galilee He teaches this lesson. At the end of the last week of His life, He teaches again this lesson to these hard-hearted obstinate men and here in Mark 10:35 as He is about to enter Jerusalem, the same lesson is taught. They bring it up. Let's read starting at verse 35, Mark 10.

"James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.' He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant that we may sit one on Your right and one on Your left in Your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' And Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you shall drink and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized, but to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.' Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, 'You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.'"

And then one of the great verses in all Scripture, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”

This is about the greatness of humility. This is the greatness of service, the greatness of slavery that is the theme in this passage. And it positions two things which are well known to all of us and one more regularly experienced than the other...pride and humility...pride and humility.

The bottom line in Scripture is that God hates pride and honors humility...God hates pride and honors humility. Any student of Scripture knows that because it is literally everywhere on the pages of Scripture. Speaking of pride, for example, we read in Proverbs 8:13, “The fear of the Lord is to hate pride.” In other words, true adoration of God is to hate pride. In Proverbs 16:5 it says, “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” And thus Proverbs 21:4 says, “A proud heart is sin....it is sin.” And there are a lot more about pride in the Old Testament, and, as you know, in the book of Proverbs. In the New Testament, however, Romans 1:30 says, “Pride is an element of the reprobate mind.” First Timothy 3:6 says, “Pride comes from the devil.” First John 2:16, “Pride is characteristic of the world.” First Timothy 6:3, “Pride is a mark of false teachers.” James 4:6, “Pride alienates one from God because God resists the proud.

On the other hand, James 4:6 says, “He gives grace to the humble.” Humility is a virtue which God honors. In Micah 6:8 it says, “What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.” Or Psalm 138:6, “Though the Lord is high, yet He has respect to the humble.” Isaiah 66:2, “To this man will I look, even to him who is poor, contrite in spirit and trembles at My word,” evidences of true humility.

In Psalm 10 verse 17 it says, “The Lord hears the desire of the humble.” And it says in Proverbs 15:33, “Before honor is humility.”

So in the New Testament we are told to put on humility, to be clothed with humility, and to walk in humility. This is tough. This is the defining sin of humanity...pride. All other sins feed pride. All temptations, all solicitations to do evil of any kind and every kind are based upon self-gratification. The reason a temptation is a temptation is because you want to do it and it appeals then to your personal fulfillment, your personal satisfaction, your personal desire, and therefore the right you have to do what you want which is an expression of your own pride and self-love. That is why at the list of sins, when it says in the Old Testament there are six things, yea seven that God hates, the first one is a proud heart cause pride is the underlying sin that leads to all other sins. And yet, in the world of humanity, pride is exalted because man exalts himself. Man seeks his own satisfaction, his own fulfillment. That's what it means to be fallen, corrupt, unregenerate. We're not surprised that pride dominates culture the way it does, certainly dominates our culture. We haven't learned anything in the history of the world about the virtues of humility and the sins of pride. Every generation of man has been proud, egotistical, self-centered, self-promoting, self-exalting. We even in this generation have found Bible verses to support our self-esteem. This is a very, very deep-seated reality in human beings, all of us...all of us.

That's why our Lord is having a very difficult time getting the lesson across to these Apostles. We're talking about His Apostles, intimate disciples, they love Jesus, they love the truth, they believe in Him, they believe in His Kingdom, they are saved, they have been regenerated, the Holy Spirit is with

them and they still struggle with pride...and they struggle greatly and they struggle in a losing fashion. They have a materialistic view of the Kingdom, not because of some esoteric distant reality, they have a materialistic view of the Kingdom because of their own person desires for exaltation...for elevation. Remember, they are common men, the commonest of common men, these Apostles and the followers of Christ. There are not many noble or mighty, they are the common folk. And the notion that they could be elevated for the first time in their lives or any son in their family, is a very appealing thing. Elevation itself is appealing. They have worked all their lives. They've served others all their lives. They've been at the lower end of the social strata. This is all heady stuff. Now they've been drawn into this intimacy with Christ, they get it now, they know who He is. They understand the Kingdom. James and John in particular were at the transfiguration, they have an exalted understanding of spiritual reality as it regards Christ and the coming Kingdom. And instead of this developing humility in them, it has fed their inordinate remaining pride. Even though the Lord said to them a principle that they should well have understood, in verse 31, "Many who are first will be last, and the last first," which means everybody ends up equal, they still perceived themselves as superior to each other.

Peter even expresses that attitude in chapter 10 verse 28 when he says, "We have left everything and followed you," and the other gospel writers say that he also added, "What's in it for us?" Come on, we've done the self-denial, take up your cross, follow You, lose your life, we've done it, what's in it for us? This pride is deep-seated pride. They want glory. They want elevation. They want exaltation. They want fulfillment, satisfaction. Consequently when Jesus talks about His own suffering, they push it away. Chapter 8:31, He tells them He's going to die and rise again. Chapter 9:31 He tells them He's going to die and rise again. Chapter 10 verses 32 to 34, the last passage we looked at, the same thing. We are going to Jerusalem, I'm going to be delivered, condemned to death, handed over to the Gentiles, etc., etc., and rise from the dead.

This was so bothersome to them that they didn't even want to discuss the details any further. They just wanted the issue to go away. Chapter 9 verse 32, they didn't understand it and they were afraid to ask any more about it. They want glory, the Kingdom, the exaltation because that's natural to human pride. No matter what our Lord had said, up to this point, it doesn't seem to have penetrated even the best of them, the ones in the inner circle, Peter, who says, "What's in it for us?" And James and John who show up with this bizarre request. Pride dies very hard in the heart...very, very hard in the heart. We're going to see that here.

They should have known their Old Testament well enough to that God exalts humility. Abraham, Genesis 18, says, "Who am I? I'm the least." Isaac was willing literally to give his life as an offering to God, that's as humbling as you can possibly get. Jacob says, "I'm not worthy of the least of Your mercies. Joseph weeps without any bitterness over the betrayal that has come from his own brothers...a humble posture. Moses, he says, "Who am I that I should go and lead this people?" Joshua tore his clothes, fell on his face, threw dirt on his head as he stood before God...all acts of humility. Gideon, Judges 6, says, "Who am I? I'm the least."

But maybe the sweetest testimony to an attitude of humility came from one of the great heroes of Judaism that these men would have known well, David. In the final chapter of 1 Chronicles, verse 10, chapter 29, "David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly, and David said, 'Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever, Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the victory and the majesty. Indeed, everything that is in the heavens and the earth, Yours is the dominion, O Lord, You exalt Yourself as head over all, both riches and honor come from You

and You rule over all and in Your hand is power and might and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now, therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name.”

Wow, that’s what should have come out of the mouth of the Twelve. That’s what should have come out of the mouth of James and John. They should have said, “All glory to You, all honor to You, all majesty to You, all dominion to You, all blessing to You forever and ever, O Lord.” And then they should have said what David said in following, “But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this, for all things come from You, from Your hand we have given You. O Lord, our God, all this abundance is from Your hand and all is Yours.” That’s the attitude that those men should have had.

That kind of humility...I just mentioned those examples....becomes heroic and every one of those names that I mentioned to you is in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. They’re the heroes of faith. You could add other names that aren’t in Hebrews 11 who are men of humility, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Job, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and more. And then there comes John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, who is not worthy to baptize Jesus, he says, he’s not worthy to even untie His sandals and he must decrease so Christ can increase.

Peter learned humility by the time he wrote his epistles and Paul is a model of humility, Acts 20, serving the Lord with all humility of mind. This is a lesson they should have known. This is a lesson they eventually learned. But it was not easy and it’s never easy for us either to learn humility.

Now as we look at our text, it unfolds around two possible paths to greatness. There are two possible paths to greatness, possible, theoretical. One is actual. The path of self-promotion would be the first one and the path of self-denial would be the second one. The path of self-promotion and the path of self-denial and they’re laid out for us in the teaching of our Lord in this wonderful text. The first is carnal, the first is worldly. And this is an approach that is modeled by worldly leaders, worldly men and women.

The second is the spiritual heavenly path modeled by Jesus Christ. Self-promotion works in the kingdom of men, it works...it works all the time. But it doesn’t work in the Kingdom of God. Self-denial works in the Kingdom of God, but it doesn’t work in the kingdom of men. Self-promotion is the world’s way, self-denial is God’s way. Self-promotion works in Satan’s kingdom. Self-denial works in God’s Kingdom. Let’s look, first of all, at the picture here of self-promotion. This is an incident that is familiar to us because it’s in Matthew 20, the same incident is recorded there.

Now as we look at this incident with James and John coming to Jesus and making their request, I want you to see how this breaks out into three characteristics of self-promotion...three characteristics of self-promotion...the path to greatness through self-promotion.

First of all, it’s motivated by self-ambition, or its defined by selfish ambition. Verse 35, “James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.’” James and John called the sons of thunder, they were brash, bold men. They were the inner circle, they were with Jesus intimately with Peter, the most intimate of all the disciples and Apostles. They were close to Him on a regular daily basis and they think they have gained some ground by that because of their intimacy, because of their participation in the Transfiguration, because they have been privy to so many private conversations in times with Jesus.

They are sure that they are certainly above and beyond the rest of the men, and so this has come to the place in their minds where they're bold enough to ask for privilege in the coming Kingdom.

But it's not just them. Matthew tells us their mother came with them...their mother came with them. The mother of Zebedee's children came, Matthew 20:20 says. Now this is important. Why would you bring your mother? Come on, be a man, what you bring your mother? Well it's not just that they brought their mother, it's who their mother was. When you study the crucifixion of Christ in the account of Matthew, Mark and John, you see three women at the cross. Mary, the mother of our Lord, Mary Magdalene, and a third woman. The third woman who is at the cross is identified in three different ways. Matthew calls her the mother of the sons of Zebedee, so it's this woman which means she hung in there. When the Apostles had fled, she hung in there. She was at the cross. It's a strong faith there. Matthew calls her the mother of Zebedee. Mark calls her Salome, so that was her name. John calls her the sister of Jesus' mother. So their mother is Jesus' aunt. So this is now a family deal. They're going to play the family card here. Okay. Not only were we at the Transfiguration, not only are we intimately involved with You in the inner circle, but Your mother is our mother's sister. That's got to be good for something big...really big.

She bought into it. She didn't ask anything for herself, she didn't ask if she could have a seat on the dais. She would find her proud fulfillment through her children, like unsuccessful people with bumper stickers. (Laughter) And others on the Internet. She comes worshiping *proskuneo*, she comes bowing low and Mark...Matthew says she's desiring a certain thing of Jesus. And what she's desiring is exactly what they asked. So they're really...this is serious ambition. This is not just personal ambition, this is not whimsical ambition, this is family ambition. Everybody's in on this deal and they're going to come and they're going to gang up on Jesus thinking they have the right.

And then they do something that's typical of a small child. Verse 35, they say, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." Do you remember when your kids wanted you to say yes before they told you what it was they wanted? Oh yeah, that's about as immature as it gets. "Please say yes, Daddy, please say yes." About what? "I'm not going to say it, just say yes, just say yes." I don't know if your kids did that, mine did that. That is really immature. Give us a *carte blanche*, give us a blanket yes and then we'll tell you what we're going to do. And, of course, the fear there is that if they tell you what they want first, there's not a chance. But if they can pile up on you and play all the cards they've got, and catch you in a moment when like these guys they brought your faithful, loving aunt who will be there at the cross. Maybe that's an emotional moment and you're going to say, "Oh well, sure, what do you want?" Very childish, very presumptive.

Well He said to them, "What do you want? What do you want Me to do for you?" He wouldn't give them an answer for a blanket, *carte blanche* approval. "What is it you want Me to do for you? What are you asking? And collectively, mother and boys, men, they said to Him, "Grant that we may sit one on Your right and one on Your left in Your glory."

I mean, do you understand? That is really brash. Are you kidding Me? I mean, they're not even in the zone of humility. They don't even know where the zip code for humility is. They're in another neighborhood all together. And after all the humility the Lord had demonstrated, they had three years of 24/7 demonstration of humility, they're not coming down the last week of His life, hadn't they learned anything from watching the humbling of Christ? Everything He ever said was an expression of His condescending humility, all His deeds. And here they are, this bold, brash, proud, sinfully, selfishly ambitious little group. It's ugly, it's really very, very ugly.

It's also brutal and unloving because they never think of the fact that they are deliberately, purposely depreciating all the other Apostles. This is not good for your relationship with other people, the people you live with and work with and are supposed to love. It's this kind of thing that caused the Lord the next week when He met with them in the Upper Room to say, "The world will know that you're My disciples when you have...what?...love for one another." This is really ugly...ugly pride. And it's characterized by this kind of strong ambition, this driving ambition that is manipulated, self-promoting ambition. That's the way it is in the world. That's what gets you to the top in the world. You are a driven, ambitious, self-centered, self-promoting person who plays every card you can find.

There's another feature of pride that rears its ugly head as well, we could call it arrogant over-confidence...arrogant over-confidence...arrogant over-confidence. This is so much a part of people's life and attitude today, it's just absolutely everywhere. They say, "We want to sit one on Your right hand, and one on Your left in Your glory." You know, at least we could compliment them for the fact that they not only believed in Jesus as the Savior, but they believed in Jesus as the Messiah and they actually believed His Kingdom was coming and He would reign in glory. That's some good theology, okay? They'd gone that far. That's good, I commend them for that. That...that is good, but the fact that they thought they were worthy and that they had demonstrated their ambition to be on the right and the left in His glory is an indication of how really ugly the condition of their hearts were. I'm glad they believed in the King and the Kingdom. I'm glad they believed in His glory.

And by the way, in ancient times kings elevated the people who were the very highest to their right and left hand. That's all that means. The most intimate associates of the King. They want that. They think they're entitled to it. They're worthy of it. So He said to them, "Do you know what you're asking?" And, of course, they didn't. "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

Drinking the cup and being baptized are references to suffering...suffering. And what our Lord is saying is, "Look, you're asking to be elevated in the Kingdom, do you understand that that is a reward that is relative to the degree of suffering that you endure?" That's the principle here. You want glory, you don't want suffering. When Jesus talked about His cross, they didn't want to ask any questions about it. They didn't want any more information, they just wanted it to go away. And it was Peter who really articulated the view of all of them, "No, no, Lord, that will never happen, that can't happen." They should have known what the Old Testament prophets had said about the Messiah, that He would die. They didn't want anything to do with that. They didn't want any suffering for Him. They didn't want any suffering for them. They're ignorant of the basic principle that reward and honor corresponds directly to sacrificial suffering. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? That's an Old Testament idiom for taking in something, draining it. And it's the cup in Isaiah 31 of God's fury, can you handle...can you handle all that is to come? Jesus was going to drink the cup of God's fury. Remember in the Garden He said, Matthew 26, "Let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done," the cup of God's wrath, He would drink it to the bottom. That was the image. Drinking the cup was literally imbibing it all in. It's an Old Testament idiom meaning fully absorbing something, fully experiencing something, taking it all in.

Psalms 75 verse 8 talks about the ungodly drinking the cup of wrath. So that cup is very often associated with suffering. Are you able to do that? Are you able to be baptized? Meaning not Christian baptism, but immersed into, plunged into, submerged. Are you really able to go all the way under and suffer? To be, as it were, drowned in persecution and ultimately martyrdom. This is strong

language. Can you literally drink it all in and be submerged in it? Cause that's what you're really asking because if you want the glory, the glory is the reward correspondent to the suffering.

And here's their ridiculous arrogant over-confidence, verse 39, "They said to Him, 'We are able.'" Oh, we are able. That is arrogant over-confidence, audacious, ridiculous. It's like Peter in Luke 22, he says, "I will never betray You, I will never betray You," and then he goes and does it. It's an over-estimation based on pride. This is typical of human pride. It is self-promoting. It is inordinately and selfishly ambitious. It is arrogantly over-confident. It assumes that it can accomplish anything. Isn't that characteristic of our world today in people's attitudes? It's ugly, it's absolutely ugly. And, of course, they couldn't...they couldn't handle it. They couldn't handle it. In Matthew 26 verse 31, the Lord quotes the Old Testament prophecy about striking the shepherd and the sheep being scattered and in Matthew 26:56 it says, "They all forsook Him and fled." They couldn't handle it. Here they wanted all the glory in the Kingdom, they wouldn't be there when the trial came, they ran for their lives.

Our Lord's answer is gentle. Jesus said to them, verse 39, "The cup that I drink you shall drink and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I'm baptized." That's a prophecy, folks, that's a prophecy.

Oh, the suffering? Yeah, you'll have that...you will have that. Yes, you will drink the cup in full and you will be submerged in suffering. For James, he's the first martyr. For John, he's the last martyr. James' martyrdom had his head cut off, came fast...soon, sudden, lightning quick. For John, his was a slow agonizing, disappointing death as an exile at the end of the century on the island of Patmos which was virtually a prison island. You will....you will drink the cup, rejected, exiled in John's case, rejected, executed in the case of James, the first and last who died because of the gospel.

But even so, verse 40, to sit on My right or My left, this is not Mine to give. But it is for those for whom it has been prepared and Matthew 20 adds "By My Father...By My Father." James, you're going to suffer. You're going to drink the cup, you're going to be baptized with the baptism of suffering. John, you're going to suffer, you're going to drink the cup, you're going to be baptized with the baptism of suffering. But as to how that corresponds in degree to other people who suffer and other people who drink the cup and are baptized with the baptism of suffering, I don't know. Jesus is indicating His condescension here, He is saying this is not Mine to give, this is for the Father to give to those for whom it is prepared by Him.

Who will be on the right hand and the left hand of Christ in the Kingdom? I have no idea. Will it be James and John, after all, they did drink the cup, they did go through the baptism even though they tried to avoid it. Will it be them? I seriously doubt it. Who will it be?

I don't know but it will be interesting to see when we all get back for the Millennium, won't it? It won't be any of us, that's for sure. But it's for the ones for whom it is prepared by My Father. And here our Lord embraces His submission to His Father in His incarnation. Who will be the highest and the most exalted, closest to the throne of Christ in His millennial glory? Only God knows. The glory seats are His to give. Are there only two? Probably not. Are there 20? Are there a hundred? I don't know. But you don't get it by asking for it, like these men did.

You say, "Well wow, they seem a lot more carnal than the rest, doing this." Not really, look at verse

31. "Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. They got preempted. James and John got there first. They were furious not because they were spiritually offended, but they thought they were getting cut out of the deal. And this is the third aspect of this and it is ugly competitiveness.

In the world you have this audacious, sinful, self-promoting, arrogant ambition and then you have this self-confidence, and then you have this spirit of competition that wants to climb on everybody else's neck. Look, they're still arguing about this at the Upper Room. They just had a hard time humbling themselves. Our Lord is so kind to them. It's time to go to school. Class is now convened. Verse 42, "Calling them to Himself...time to teach...crucial decisive lesson. Guys, you know, I'm going to tell you something you know...we'll start there and then we'll talk about what you obviously don't know, but let's start with what you know. You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the nations, pagans, Gentiles, lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them."

What's He saying? He's saying, "Wait a minute. Where did you learn this? Where did you see this kind of attitude? Where does this come from?" You know that, very familiar, ancient rulers were ambitious, ancient rulers were self-promoting, ancient rulers were confident, arrogant, self-exalting, dictatorial, domineering. They lord it over them," *katakuriuo*, *kurios*, lord with a proposition on the front, very strong word, to gain mastery, subdue, to function as a despot, as an autocratic ruler. That's what they do. They lord it over people. They want the top. They want to climb on top of everybody, they want everybody to serve them and honor them and respect them and do what they want. That's the Gentiles. That's the nations. And the great men, the *hoi megaloi*, the big shots. They exercise authority. They throw their weight around, sort of a domineering monarchial display of power. They were used to this. They saw it with the Romans, Caesar, Pilate. They saw it with the Herodians, Herod the Great and his sons. They saw it with every other petty ruler and monarch. The world has always been filled with those kinds of people and let me tell you something, the more corrupt they are, the more unscrupulous they are, the more likely they are to claw their way to the top. And a virtue can't sustain the fight because they can't completely sell their souls. So the world has been filled with the ambitious, over-confident, competitive people who know no limits and no bounds to their ambition. And at all costs, driven by corrupt hearts, proud hearts, they seek the seats of power at the expense of everybody. Ambition, over-confidence, competitiveness leads to this kind of greatness, the greatness of self-promotion. It works in the world. It works in the world.

But on the other hand...on the other hand...the lesson goes on in verse 43, here is the path of self-denial, "But it is not this way among you." Who are you? People in the Kingdom. It's not this way. John 18:36, "My Kingdom is not of this world." The pagan approach works in the world, it doesn't work in the Kingdom. The great are not those who climb their way to the top, who manipulate their way to the top, who abuse their way to the top, who demand their way to the top. It's just the opposite...just the opposite. Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

Boy, that is a stark contrast between great men, big shots, rulers and servant-slaves. Whoever wishes to become great. You want to be great in the Kingdom? Now that's a noble desire. I absolutely affirm that is a noble desire. Do you want to be great in the Kingdom? Sure. You want to have it as your ambition, 1 Corinthians 5:9, to be pleasing to Him, right? You want to seek your reward and not lose the reward which you've already wrought. You already know that the Lord is coming and His reward is with Him, Revelation 22. Paul comes at the end of his life, what does he say? "I finished the course, kept the faith, run the race, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown."

That's noble ambition, to please the Lord, to take the crown and lay it at His feet and give Him all the glory. If that's your heart's desire, that's a noble thing. First Timothy 3, "If you desire the office of a pastor or an overseer, you desire a good work."

Paul didn't want to be disqualified, 1 Corinthians 9, in preaching to others, so he beat his body into submission so he would never disqualify himself from full usefulness and full reward. He was happy to let God judge him. He said, "I don't care what men say, it's a small thing. I wait for the day when the Lord will reveal the secrets of the heart and then shall every man have praise from God. It's a right thing to desire that if the motive is pure and the motive is God-honoring.

So you want that? Here's the path. Be a servant. Be a servant. *Diakonos* is the word, table waiter was its primary meaning, be a waiter. Don't be the person that everybody serves, be the person who serves everybody. Big difference, you know. You go... the fancier the restaurant you go to, the bigger the gap between the people eating and the people serving. You be the server, not the one served. You be the table waiter. That's what it is to be a servant.

There are six words in the New Testament for servant, all of them Greek words, all of them describe a function, *oikonomos*, house servant; *huperetes*, an under-rower in a galley ship pulling oars down in the bottom of a big trireme ship. Be a servant. Be somebody who does something for someone else. You're not served, you are serving. Be a servant. He doesn't say, "Be an *archon*, be a ruler. He doesn't say be a *time*, a dignified official. He doesn't say be a *telos*, possessing a powerful office. He doesn't say be a *hiereus*, a priest. The word is, be a waiter...be a waiter. Give your life giving people what they need. Spend your life giving people what they need.

And it doesn't end there. Go down even from there, verse 44, if you want to be first, prime, then be the slave of all. Wow! The slave of all? This is the word *doulos* about which you have heard much because of the book Slave. I cannot tell you, folks, how important it is that you read that book, it will change your entire understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Slave, slaves were inferior to servants. Servants did a job. Slaves were owned, totally controlled.

He's saying, "Consider everybody a person to be served, and consider everyone to be your master." You are obligated. Not only do you have the opportunity to serve, you have the obligation to serve.

And who's the model for that? Verse 45, "For even the Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve. And then to give His life a ransom for many." The greatest service and the greatest slavery was exhibited by Christ, right? He didn't come to be served. He's not like other kings. He's not like other rulers. We say He condescended. That's one of the ways. He didn't come like all kings to be served. He came to serve. He didn't come merely to be lord and master, he came also be slave of His Father and do His Father's will. He came to be the servant, *diakoneo* is the verb, but to serve. But it goes down from there in giving His life He actually offered a level of obedience which could be deemed slavery. And that's the language of Philippians. Listen to this, "Do nothing...verse 3, Philippians 2...from selfishness or empty conceit," this is the same kind of instruction coming from Paul that our Lord gave the Apostles, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves." That's exactly what our Lord is saying. And then, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but the interest of others." And here is the model, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a *doulos*, the form of a slave." Humbled Himself to the point of death,

even death on the cross.

And what happened to Him? For this reason God highly exalted Him. He made the greatest sacrifice so He was the most exalted. God gave Him a name above...what?...every name. So He got the highest name because He made the greatest sacrifice. That's the principle. The greater the sacrifice, the more the glory. The greatest sacrifice gets the greatest glory. That's Christ. That's the model. That's the pattern.

You want greatness in the Kingdom? It's correlated to your selfless serving slavery on behalf of others in sacrifice. And what was the actual service that Christ rendered? End of verse 45, "He gave His life...we know that....why?...a ransom for many...a ransom for many." *Lutron* is the Greek word, it means the price paid for the release of a slave. The price paid for the release of a slave. Only used here and in Matthew 20, parallel account. He gave His life as the price paid for the release of a slave.

To whom was the ransom paid? To God...to God. God is the judge who had to be satisfied. The God is the executioner who had to be appeased, propitiated. This is now today gratefully and thankfully become the dominant theme in our understanding of the gospel that Jesus is the ransom, Jesus is the substitute. Jesus dies a vicarious substitutionary death on behalf of sinners. That's what it says. He gave His life to pay the price in full, the price of sin had to be paid to God to His divine justice, His justice had to be satisfied. The price that Christ paid satisfied God, propitiated His anger, settled His justice. He did it for many. I love the kind of Hebraic way of saying this, for many...in exchange for many.

What does that mean? What's the emphasis there? Why does the word many appear? Because it's juxtaposed with Son of Man. The ransomed, bought by the sacrificial death of Christ are the many in contrast to the one Son of Man. One Son of Man pays the ransom for many. The path then to glory in God's Kingdom is through humble sacrifice, seeing yourself as a servant and a slave and your model is Christ and He was lifted up and exalted by His Father and given a name above every name and the names that come under Him in the glory to come will be the names of those who have served and sacrificed and deemed by God to be at the highest level.

The path to greatness is not the world's way, it's God's way. The world's way works in the world. God's way works in the Kingdom.

Father, we thank You again for the worship, this morning, the fellowship, the joy of music and praise. We thank You now for the truth of Scripture, lessons we all need so greatly to learn and relearn. May we give our lives in service as slaves to all, even as we are slaves to Christ. This is a high and holy privilege and this is how love operates within the family of God. Lord, we know that we have folks that are here with us today who are outside the Kingdom. They're in the world, part of the world. We would pray, Lord, that their hearts would be opened to the gospel even as we read earlier, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins is made available to all who will believe in Him. May this be a day of faith when sinners turn from their sin and embrace the salvation that is in Christ and receive the privilege of serving one another and the privilege of one day being exalted and glorified in the Kingdom to come. Thank You for applying this to our hearts individual as we leave this place and we take the truth with us now. May it search our hearts and change us and may it help us instruct others as well. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2018 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).