

The “Be Attitude”

The Loving Life of the Servant of Christ

Introduction

What goes through your mind when you hear the term “servant”? Do you see images of slavery complete with whippings, abasement, and ridicule? Perhaps you merely see images of someone who willingly does what others bid. In any case, do you like what you see? More importantly, do you see yourself as a servant?

Orchestra conductor Leonard Bernstein was asked, “Mr. Bernstein, what’s the most difficult instrument to play?” He answered, “Second fiddle.” He explained further, “If no one plays second, we have no harmony.”

The Apostle Paul said it even better. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others.” (Phil 2:3-4)

Do you see yourself as a servant, one who is humbly willing to consider others as more important than yourself? No matter who you are as a Christian, hopefully the following will provide information and encouragement regarding exactly what a faithful servant of Christ is to be.

A Servant is One Who Gives

We know that all things have been given to us by our LORD. We also know that God wants us to share what we have with others. If we see a need, He wants us to fill it. If we see someone hurting, He wants us to soothe the pain. If we see someone who is struggling, He wants us to ease the burden.

In short He wants us to give, and not always in terms of money. He wants us to give of ourselves. But how shall we give? Perhaps the passage that jumps out at you is this: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7)(NIV) He does not want us to give because we have to, but cheerfully, because we want to.

In that same letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes an example of the generosity of the Macedonians. He writes in chapter 8,

1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will (2 Cor. 8:1-5).(NIV)

What jumps out at you about the generosity of the Macedonians? They gave with “overflowing joy”, “beyond their ability”, “entirely on their own.” And even though they were poor, they begged for the “privilege of sharing” what little they had to further the ministry of Paul. We know they did it with a servant heart because they “gave themselves first to the Lord” before giving to the work.

Another example is that of Onesiphorus, a man who visited Paul in prison.

16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;

17 but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me (2 Tim. 1:16-17).(NASB)

Notice here a couple of adverbs to describe how the servant serves: “often” and “eagerly.”

How do we stack up as givers? Perhaps we need to examine ourselves and see our possessiveness, and our tendency to hoard what we've been given. This tendency gnaws away at our willingness to share our wealth, time, and talents. What we need to do is to release *our* way of responding to others, and to ask God to make *His* way come alive inside us.

How is this possible?

14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

15 And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again (2 Cor. 5:14-15).(NIV)

So a servant is one who gives. What else?

A Servant is One Who Forgives

When you are involved in a situation where wrong has been done to someone, there are two possibilities: either you are the one who offended or the one who has been offended. Let's look at the first possibility in the book of Matthew.

23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matt. 5:23-24).

When you have sinned against a brother, there are four things you need to do. **Stop** what you're doing, **go** to the one you offended, **be reconciled** to him, then **return** to what you were doing. What adds urgency to the matter is the fact that the activity interrupted in this example is worship. God says even worship is to be interrupted, and reconciliation to take place so the offender can worship with a clear and undistracted conscience.(Sw p. 60)

We know how an unreconciled conscience can tear one apart. David admitted it sometime after Nathan confronted him about his sins.

3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah (Ps. 32:3-4).(NIV)

So go to the person you offended, and ask for forgiveness.

You might ask the question, "What if the person doesn't forgive me?" Good question. There aren't any perfect answers other than you are responsible for you and I am responsible for me. If you're the offender, it is clear in the example that you should initiate the reconciliation. Go and make your sincere, humble, heartfelt apology, but don't expect anything in particular. The one who was offended may need time to have God work a change in the heart. In the meantime, God will honor your effort.(Sw p. 60)

What do you do when you are the offended party? Another good question. We wouldn't be like that unmerciful servant in the parable of the same name, would we? You remember the story, the one where the servant who was forgiven a huge debt he could never repay, turned around and demand payment from someone who owed him. When he wasn't satisfied, our servant was unmerciful and threw his debtor into prison. The sad truth is that we absolutely are like the unmerciful servant whenever we don't forgive one who asks us for forgiveness.

Notice the lesson in the parable by Jesus.

34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed (Matt. 18:34).

It's clear from this parable that Jesus instructs us to forgive those who ask for our forgiveness. If we refuse to forgive, we have hell fire waiting for us.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:15).

But what if the person who offended you never does ask for forgiveness? Indeed, sometimes a person isn't aware that he offended you at all.

8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).(NIV)

This passage speaks to us, does it not? How many times have we offended someone and didn't have the slightest idea what we had done? Can those times even be numbered? If forgiveness was dependent upon our confession, then a great many of our sins would go unforgiven simply because of our ignorance. God wants us to love one another, and to forgive those who trespass against us, whether they ask for forgiveness or not.

Another poignant example from Scripture is in Matthew chapter 7.

3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matt. 7:3-5).

The Psalms are full of rich, poetic Gospel, flowing with forgiveness. For example:

2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits

3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,

5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

10 He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us

(Psalm 103:2-5, 10-12).(NIV)

We tend to measure love in strength. Perhaps your love for your spouse is strong today, and something happens to strengthen it or weaken it. God, on the other hand, measures love in volume. Height, depth, length, width, east, west. As far as you can imagine in all directions. That's how much God loves you.

Whether the one who offended you asks for forgiveness or not, think about Psalm 103. If we always put a qualifier on forgiveness, we make forgiveness something less than Christ intended. His love for us is unconditional. His forgiveness for us is limitless. His is the perfect example to follow.

A Servant Has a Good "Forgetter"

One of the most frustrating afflictions for a person getting up there in age is being forgetful. I can remember the most insignificant tidbits of trivia like Babe Ruth's birth date, only to forget where I set my wallet down. I can draw a detailed map of the Battle of Chancellorsville, but then forget an important meeting. Having an iron-clad memory would be wonderful, wouldn't it? Actually, it wouldn't be all that wonderful.

If there's one thing we are not good at, it's letting go when someone has wronged us. But letting go is exactly what God wants us to do.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:4-5).

God wants us to forget. I don't think Paul's talking about a literal forgetting here. He's talking about forgetting out of love, as in the passage above. Webster's Dictionary distinguishes between two types of forgetting. One type is to inadvertently fail to recall. Another type, however, is to *intentionally* omit or overlook. This is the type of forgetting God wants us to use when forgiving.

Paul certainly could have kept a long list of people that had wronged him with all the chains and stripes and stonings he had to endure, but he knew it was all somehow part of what he had to go through. He knew why.

13 ... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

Perhaps the best human example of forgiving and forgetting is Joseph. We all know the story of how he was thrown down the well and abandoned by his own brothers, sold into slavery, and so on. Years later, when their father Jacob was dead, the brothers feared retribution from Joseph. But he reassured them,

20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

21 Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Gen. 50:20-21).

Joseph's first born son was a living testimonial to Joseph's willingness to intentionally forget.

51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." (Gen. 41:51)(NIV)

Notice that God *made* Joseph forget. Ask God to enable you to forget.

One last thing about forgiving and forgetting. If you think you're too old to change, that you're set in your ways, and that after all these years being a good forgetter is just too much to ask of you, consider this poem by Longfellow called *Never Too Late*.

"It is too late!" Ah, nothing is too late –
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles
Wrote his grand "Oedipus," and Simonides
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers
When each had numbered more than fourscore years;
And Theophrastus, at fourscore and ten,
Had begun his "Characters of men."
Chaucer, at Woodstock, with his nightingales,
At sixty wrote the "Canterbury Tales."
Goethe, at Weimar, toiling to the last,
Completed "Faust" when eighty years were past.
What then? Shall we sit idly down and say,
"The night has come; it is no longer day?"
For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress.
And as evening twilight fades away,
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

Never Too Late by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

When my Grandpa had reached his final days, and dementia had set in, he smiled and said, "I used to have a good memory. Now I have a good forgetter!" My friends, this is my wish for you when it's time for you to forgive.

A Servant Has a Renewed Mind

Is it possible to have a frame of mind that is quite different from those in the world around you? Not only is it possible, it's essential!

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).

The problem is that we have our Old Adam working against us, building walls in an attempt to prevent us from developing a renewed mind. By nature we keep score of wrongs, we look for opportunities to get even, we are quick on the draw to spread gossip about those who offend us instead of approaching the offender in person, and we resist praying for those who owe us an apology.

The beauty of the New Man is that we have been freed from these thoughts. Our renewed mind in Christ can overcome these walls of spite and destruction and can focus on the salvation we

all have been given through Christ.

Permit me to share with you a fictitious story by Larry Christiansen that helps make the point.

Think of yourself as living in an apartment. You live there under a landlord who has made your life miserable. He charges you exorbitant rent. When you can't pay, he loans you money at a fearful rate of interest to get you even further into his debt. He barges into your apartment at all hours of the day and night, wrecks and dirties the place up, then charges you extra for not maintaining the premises. Your life is miserable.

Then comes Someone who says, "I've taken over this apartment. I've purchased it. You can live here for free. The rent is paid up. I am going to be living here with you." What a joy! You are saved! You are delivered out of the clutches of the old landlord!

But what happens? You hardly have time to rejoice in your new-found freedom when a knock comes at the door. And there he is – the old landlord! Mean, glowering, and demanding as ever. He has come for the rent, he says.

What do you do? Do you pay him? Of course, you don't!

You confidently tell him, "You'll have to take it up with the new Landlord." He may bellow, threaten, wheedle, and cajole. You just quietly tell him, "Take it up with the new Landlord." If he comes back a dozen times, with all sorts of threats and arguments, you simply tell him yet once again, "Take it up with the new Landlord."

The Renewed Mind by Larry Christiansen

A Servant Wishes to be What God Wants Him to be.

He has a "Be Attitude".

The more we read about Jesus' expectations of us, the more it becomes very obvious that He wants us to be different from the world. He tells us that we may have heard this or that tidbit of worldly wisdom, but he wants us to think on a higher plane.

43 You have heard that it was said, "*You shall love your neighbor*" and hate your enemy.

44 But I say to you love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (Matt. 5:43-44).

Jesus wanted to instill in His disciples the character traits of humility and authenticity. This type of behavior was different than what the disciples were seeing in the world of that day, and the same holds true for us today. "Therefore do not be like them," He tells us in Matt. 6:8.

Jesus teaches a new attitude – the way He wants us to be. It's His "Be Attitude" that he teaches in His Sermon On the Mount. In this sermon He reveals the eight facets to this attitude. Eight Beatitudes that describe the "Be Attitude". When all eight are mixed together in the Christian life, balance emerges in the servant of Christ. Let's look at these eight features that bring His servants true happiness. As we do so, please take note that each of these has a promise attached.

#1 "Poor in Spirit"

3 Blessed *are* poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3 NKJV).

This is not speaking of the man who is financially poor, but of the man who is so spiritually humble that he puts his whole trust in God. He is totally dependent on his LORD. This spiritual humility is exemplified in a document from 1776 – no, not the Declaration of Independence. It's the hymn "Rock of Ages." Check out the utter humility in stanza 3:

Nothing in my hand I bring.
Simply to the cross I cling.
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace,
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die! (TLH 376, st. 3)

The promise for the servant who depends completely on Christ: the kingdom of Heaven.

#2 “Those Who Mourn”

4 Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matt. 5:4)

Matthew here used one of the strongest Greek words he could find for this word “mourn”. It’s a very heavy word that conveys the sorrow of a broken heart, the ache of soul, the anguished mind. It could include mourning over wrong in the world, mourning over personal loss, and mourning over the death of someone close. (Sw p. 103)

At the heart of this character trait is compassion. True servants are like their LORD, compassionate. Our world needs more compassion. When we need compassion, our LORD feels our pain.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Since we know what it means to mourn, Jesus wants us to be compassionate for those who mourn, and to bring comfort to them.

The promise for the servant who mourns: comfort.

So far we’ve looked at two attitudes of the servant: extreme dependence and strong compassion. There’s more . . .

#3 “The Meek”

5 Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).

Don’t confuse meekness with weakness. God is not saying “Blessed are the weak, for they shall become doormats.” No. A more accurate synonym for meekness is gentleness. It’s the gentleness of carefully chosen words to soothe someone’s anger. It’s the ointment that takes the sting out of a wound. Gentleness is having a quiet strength under control, peaceful when in the midst of a heated atmosphere, having tact and courtesy that causes others to retain their dignity. Gentleness is not a weakness, but a trait that shows others that you are tower of strength when times get dicey.

When you are meek, please don’t think that means you’re insignificant. When Jesus the servant was washing His disciples feet, Peter told him, “You shall never wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

As a meek and humble servant of Christ, your work is anything but insignificant.

In this world, however, doesn’t it look like the polite and gentle get bulldozed by the liars and schemers? It looks like the wicked win out. King David addressed this in his day:

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath' do not fret – it only causes harm.

9 For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.
(Psalm 37:7-9).

The promise for the servant who is meek: a wonderful inheritance!

#4 “Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness”

6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled (Matt. 5-6).

This beatitude is a carryover of the previous one, but the two seem to contradict one another. They in fact do not. We will see corruption and sinful activity in this world. Christ gives us a responsibility as Christians to let our light shine instead of hiding it under a basket.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Christ wants us to have an insatiable appetite for what is right and fair in this world. He wants us to be patient in the LORD when we see the wicked prosper, but not to sit on our hands when we see it happening. In all gentleness, we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. More on this later.

The promise for the servant who hungers and thirsts for righteousness: satisfaction.

#5 “The Merciful”

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7).

Mercy is concern for people in need, an offering of help for those who hurt. It doesn't simply mean feeling sorry for someone. Mercy is the ability to get right inside the other person's skin. It's a deliberate identification with the person until we see and feel things as he sees and feels them. (*The Gospel of Matthew* by William Barclay)

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan shows us exactly what mercy is. He was a servant who didn't simply offer kind words of encouragement. In his mercy he was willing to get dirty and bloody for his fellow man. When I hear stories of the poverty in India by some of our mission helpers, I can hear mercy in their voice. Their hearts go out to those in need.

The promise for the servant who is merciful: mercy.

#6 “The Pure in Heart”

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).

Being pure in heart doesn't simply mean doing the right things, but doing right things for the right reason. It means being free from hypocrisy. If there's one thing Jesus hates, it's hypocrisy.

25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence (Matt. 23:25). In that same chapter there are seven more “Woe to you” warnings from our Savior to hypocrites.

In ancient Greece an actor would put on a large, grinning mask and recite his lines of comedy

to get the audience laughing. Then he would go backstage to put on his sad, frowning mask and recite his tragic lines to get the audience moaning and weeping. This actor was called the *hypocritos*, or 'one who wears a mask'. (Sw p. 117)

Christ wants His servant to take the mask off and leave it off. As much as He despises hypocrisy, He loves pureness in heart.

The promise for the servant who is pure in heart: seeing God.

#7 "The Peacemakers"

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9).

What is a peacemaker?

It does not mean, "Blessed are those who avoid all confrontations."

Neither does it mean, "Blessed are those who are laid back, easygoing, and relaxed."

Nor, "Blessed are the passive, who compromise their convictions when surrounded by those who would disagree." (Sw p. 117)

The apostle Paul helps us a little bit with this one.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18).

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another (Rom. 14:19).

The peacemaking servant is internally at ease and not abrasive, and therefore able to settle quarrels instead of pouring gas on the fire. The servant is constantly:

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones (Prov. 16:24).

18 A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel (Prov. 15:18).(NIV)

The promise for the servant who is a peacemaker: being called a son of God.

#8 "Those Who Have Been Persecuted"

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:10).

This one seems to be displaced. Why would gentle peacemakers be persecuted? Well, we know that in a perfect world there wouldn't be a need for gentle peacemakers. Our world is so far from perfect that the gentle peacemakers who hunger and thirst for righteousness are actually persecuted – sometimes with subtlety and sometimes with overt brutality. Here are the next two verses.

11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matt. 5:11-12).

Persecution in various forms is going to happen. God's servant will be ridiculed and spoken evil of – sometimes falsely. And how are you to react when this happens to you? You already know – with gentleness, humility, pureness of heart, and utter dependence on your loving LORD for support.

If it is any comfort, remember that you're not alone in your suffering. We are instructed that there were prophets in the past that suffered as well.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword (Heb. 11:37).

You probably won't have to endure these extreme forms of persecution, but you do and will face persecution nonetheless. You might face slander. When things aren't going well, people will believe things about you that contain only shreds of truth, the rest teeming with sensationalized versions of the truth. Your day to day consistent efforts won't be noticed, but your slip ups will be. There will be tough times in the servant's life.

But our Savior says you will be blessed when you endure persecution on account of Him, promising you a great reward for your patient, mature endurance.

We often bring our own suffering upon ourselves. How many of us have exceeded the speed limit without getting caught? What if you *do* get caught? Do you say to the officer, "A lot of guys went blowing by me at 80, and I get ticketed for going 10 over?" I'll tell you, God has no respect for you if you have that attitude.

Here's another attitude that God will give you no credit for: for getting caught speeding, or committing any other infraction, and patiently accepting the consequences.

But do you know what God *is* impressed with? It's this.

18 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God (I Peter 2:20).(NASB)

The promise for the servant who endures persecution for Christ's sake: the kingdom of heaven.

So there's the portrait Jesus paints of His faithful servant. I hope it has been both enlightening and encouraging for you. All of this begs the question: can such a person as this really influence this dark, fast, competitive, strong-willed world in which we live? The answer is "Yes!" In this world, it is God's servants that are the salt and the light.

God's Servant as Salt

What's the worst odor you've ever smelled? To me, it's easy. As I walk into the kitchen on the first day, I notice there's something in the air. I hope it just goes away by tomorrow. By the time tomorrow rolls around, I know something is definitely not right somewhere in the kitchen. By day three, the stench has grown to the point where I stop doing everything until I find the source. I pull all of the appliances away from the wall, scour the pantry, search high and low until I find it – the dead mouse.

A rotting mouse is the most invasive stench ever to invade my olfactory nerves. I simply cannot stand it!

Rotting meat is the reason Jesus brings up salt in the first place. The best way to preserve meat in His day was to introduce salt. Salt was the preservative of choice, so it was very clear to His disciples exactly what He meant when He called them the "salt of the earth." They, as well as we today, are to hinder the process of decay on earth.

We don't have to look long before finding examples of moral decay in our world.

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim 3:13).

Plenty of decadence was going on in the Apostle Paul's day, and it's even worse today, we are told. There are rip-off artists at every turn, invading the home via the television, telephone, radio, newspaper, magazine, and computer.

Christ has a role for us in this world of decadence.

13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men (Matt. 5:13).

We must do the work of preservation. But did you catch the attached warning? If we lose our flavor, or distinctive Christianity, we become worthless. We no longer are an effective preservative.

Can we go too far in our saltiness? Yes. Too much salt will ruin the meat. We are to be careful not to be too Puritanical in our approach to preserving the world. A balance is called for when introducing salt.

God's Servant as Light of the World

How do you like being called what Jesus called Himself?

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Jesus calls us the same thing.

14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16).

A light basically has one function: to dispel darkness. It doesn't matter how thick the darkness, when the light goes on, the darkness can no longer remain – that is, if the light is not limited in any way. The light should be placed on a hill. It should not be placed under a basket, but on a lamp stand.

Light has features for our consideration. First, light is silent. No big noise, no big splash, no trumpets hailing its arrival. Like a lighthouse along a rugged coastline, light is a quiet influence.

Second, light attracts attention. If you're a Christian on a local softball or volleyball team, you are a light in the darkness. If you are a Christian family in a neighborhood, you are a light in the darkness. If you're a Christian nurse on a hospital floor, you are a light in the darkness. (Sw p. 135)

Exemplars of Servanthood

Robert E. Lee isn't mentioned in Holy Scripture, but he makes a fine secular example of servitude, even in a position of authority.

"He was a foe without hate, a friend without treachery, a soldier without cruelty, and a victim without murmuring. He was a public officer without vices, a private citizen without wrong, a neighbor without reproach, a Christian without hypocrisy, and a man without guilt. He was Caesar without his ambition, Frederick without his tyranny, Napoleon without his selfishness, and Washington without his reward." (*Familiar Quotations* by John Bartlett, p. 660)

When it comes to examples in the Bible, it's difficult to ignore the Apostle Paul. What a radical transformation the man from Tarsus went through! The former strong-willed Pharisee called Saul became the humble and transparent servant of Christ called Paul. As an apostle he was a leader in the new Church, but he conducted himself as a servant. Indeed, almost every letter he wrote to Christians was begun with the greeting, "Paul, a servant..." or "Paul, a bond servant..."

His humility didn't stop there. Listen to his words to the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, when I

came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” (I Cor. 2:1-2)

He did not try to hide his faults. He admitted them. He was open. He was honest. He was transparent. He even went so far as to call himself the chief of sinners.

Paul was not in it to further himself. When people follow leaders that are image conscious, the leader is exalted. When people follow leaders with servant hearts, the LORD God is exalted. (Sw p. 25)

Part of having a servant heart means not being so defensive when confronted. Try to take criticism constructively, even if it isn't always portrayed that way. It's difficult to do, but if you can somehow be non defensive, you will see that there is probably something in the criticism that has merit, and will help you somehow. If others get the impression that they have to walk on egg shells around you, how will you ever be helped in becoming a better servant?

There are other examples, of course. There is Moses, who learned patience in the wilderness as a shepherd for forty years. There is Daniel, whose enemies looked and looked for fault in him, and could find nothing corrupt.

There are also examples of servants who fell prey to temptation, like Elisha's servant Gehazi, who allowed the sin of greed to cause him to make an unfortunate decision. His story warns us as servants that we do have chinks in the armor to guard against, and to pray for strength against the devil's snares.

A servant does not look for greatness for himself. Let's learn something from a request asked by Zebedee's wife. She had requested of Jesus that He set aside places of honor in heaven for her two sons, James and John. Jesus, taking His disciples aside, used this as a life lesson. He instructed them, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28)

The ultimate exemplar of servitude is Jesus Christ Himself. Earlier we mentioned Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Let's take a closer look at John, chapter 13.

14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

What a great lesson for the disciples. Instead of being told to repay the favor by washing Jesus' feet, they were instructed to serve one another.

Conclusion

Finally, faithful service in the Name of Jesus Christ has its rewards. First there are rewards here during our pilgrimage on earth.

7 When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7).

In addition, God will make sure we have the strength to perform the service.

10 Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

Ultimately, *heavenly* rewards await His servants. His faithfulness toward us is iron-clad. We need not worry about our destination.

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His Name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister (Heb. 6:10).

37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?"

38 "When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?"

39 "Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"

40 And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." (Matt. 25:37-40)

At last, it will truly be a sweet sound to hear our Master's voice speak to us on that last day:

"Well done, good and faithful servant."