

Chapter 8: Servant: Reaping a Reward

Man is born to be a servant and a servant he must be. Who shall be his master? That is the question. — Charles Spurgeon

When serving makes me look good it's rewarding. When my service is deficient I get angry and want to blame someone. When my service is overlooked, I feel resentful and unappreciated.

Identity Theft

- Many Christians take for granted that serving others is a good thing.
 - o Jesus said: " But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt 20:26-28)
- Some relationships we have no choice but to serve: small children/ aging parents
- Difficult to move from knowing you *should* serve to joyfully serving those who may take you for granted.
- So often we do an act of service hoping for them to be grateful or to think well of us.
- We may agree as Christians, that we are to be servant-hearted, but no one wants to be treated like a servant.

However, the good servant lives to please his master and to serve those the master assigns to his care. My only master is God. He has given me neighbors to serve for his sake. Pleasing other people is a good thing, but when I serve for their approval rather than gods, I put them in the place of the master and forget my true identity: a servant of God.

Identity Truth

Reason it is hard to serve when we aren't appreciated or feel overlooked:

- God designed us to seek approval and a reward for our hard work
 - o The problem is in when we seek the reward from the wrong people
 - o Scriptural motive for service is the hope of blessing (John 13:12-17).

Biblical motive for serving others:

"Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:22-24)

Remember you are serving the Lord. What sort of reward can we expect from our Master?

- An inheritance, we will be God's heirs

- Jesus promises that those who serve him will be with him and honored by his Father: “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:25-26).

Isn't honor what we crave when we serve? — That's how God designed us!! But we must seek it from Him!

Doesn't our salvation in Christ apart from works make us heirs? Absolutely! We can only be made right with God through the shed blood of Jesus.

- His righteousness, not ours, gives us access into his presence
- Yet, over and over we are told that our actions in this life have consequences in the next.

Jesus warned, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:1).

- Glorious news: our Father will celebrate good deeds that go unnoticed on earth.
- This promise helps us embrace our identity as servants!!

Identity Transformed

What might it look like to live out a transformed identity as a servant of God? To serve in the hope of honoring God rather than rising in the estimation of others?

- Washing the coffee pot at work week after week without being noticed
- Cheerfully visiting a relative with Alzheimer's who doesn't recognize you and complains her family has forgotten her
- Serving a store-bought dessert or dinner to dinner guests even though no one was ever impressed by the ability to buy a dessert
- Volunteering on the cleanup crew for a fundraiser even though you know the decorating crew is more fun and earns more recognition.

We serve knowing we're serving the Lord rather than men and women.

- This takes the focus off ourselves and our needs for appreciation, or to enhance our own image
- Frees us to concentrate on how we can best meet the needs of our neighbors
- We may have “fails” but don't need to get defensive or let it shake our identity
 - o Your act of service may end up lowering you in the estimation of the one you tried to serve.
 - Apologize from the heart and make whatever restoration you can
 - Rest in the fact that you are a beloved, treasured heir of God, even if you appear incompetent before men.
- What about the times when our service is warmly appreciated by those we serve?
 - o Don't live for those moments, or count on them to fuel our service
 - But, rejoice in the glimpse they offer of the joy God takes in our service.

Jesus gave up the glory of heaven to become the servant of men by saving us from our sins. He was despised and rejected by those he came to serve. Yet he loved us to the end, and he received his reward: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name . ." (Philippians 2:9). Whether we are applauded or despised by those around us, we too can serve for the joy of our Master and enter into his great reward.