

Equal Honour in the Lord's Service

"As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." – 1 Samuel 30:24

Summary:

David's command that those guarding the supplies should share equally with those who fought illustrates the equity of Christ's kingdom. God's servants differ in circumstances, gifts, opportunities, and duties, but he values faithful willingness rather than public prominence. Genuine inability does not diminish acceptance, whereas laziness, self-indulgence, or cowardice cannot be disguised as incapacity. This principle guards against pride, keeps believers from despising less visible service, encourages contentment in one's calling, and comforts those with limited opportunities. Moral greatness consists not in extraordinary work, but in performing ordinary duties faithfully, with a sincere desire to please and glorify God.

Outline:

1. **David established an equitable rule**
 - Those who guarded the supplies shared equally with those who fought in the battle.
2. **God's servants have different callings**
 - Some serve publicly and others privately, but every faithful role contributes to the same cause.
3. **Willingness must accompany genuine inability**
 - God accepts the willing deed when circumstances prevent action, but not excuses created by laziness.
4. **Diverse gifts should produce humility**
 - No believer may despise another or abandon the station God has placed them in.
5. **Faithfulness determines true greatness**
 - God measures service by fidelity and zeal, not by status, visibility, or outward splendour.

Text

The Amalekites burned Ziklag, David's home, and took its people captive. After consulting the Lord, David pursued them, assured he would recover everything. He did. During the pursuit, two hundred exhausted men stayed behind at the brook Besor. Returning with his property and the enemy's riches, David approached and greeted them.

But the wicked men who had gone with David said, "Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and children." David replied, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." From then on, David made this a statute in Israel.

This statute's equity is obvious. Let us consider how far a greater than David sanctions his conduct on this occasion. The Lord's followers differ in circumstances, employment, condition, office, talents, opportunities, efforts, and trials. Some need courage, others patience; some energy, others prudence. Some fight while others supply them; some attack, others defend. Some serve publicly, others privately; some work far away, others keep home.

This difference does not affect their acceptance or recompense. They shall share alike if they serve the Lord and do what they can. So it was at the brook Besor: though willing, some men could not pursue the enemy. They still served by guarding the baggage. Why, then, should they be forgotten or overlooked? Had these men refused to march or fight, making excuses while their companions toiled and bled, sharing the spoil equally would have been unjust.

The apostle's words encourage some but are often abused by others: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." God accepts good intentions instead of actions only when genuine inability prevents action. The will counts as the deed when the deed cannot follow. No excuse justifies failing to act according to one's capacity and means. God knows whether

our claimed impediments are real or pretended. Self-indulgence, sloth, and cowardice often create them.

Some are crippled by extravagant spending on food, furniture, and clothing. Living at or beyond their means, they have nothing to give the poor or support Christ's cause. Who forces them to live so lavishly? Surely not he who says, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

When his people desire to serve the Lord, he values not only what they do but what they would do if unprevented. David wanted to build a house for God's name, but was forbidden. The Lord approved his intention and promised to build him a house. Is this speculation curious or useless? It guards against pride and disdain. We should not undervalue others who lack our advantages but serve in different ways. God smiles upon them; we should respect them.

Let not the eye say to the hand, "I have no need of thee," nor the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." Even the parts of the body that seem weaker are necessary. Therefore, Paul warns everyone not to think too highly of themselves, but to think soberly, according to the measure of faith God has given them.

Though many, we are one body in Christ, each with a different role and members of one another. Faithfully use the gifts given by grace: service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy. This principle should keep us from abandoning our stations for places we were not designed to fill. Though we may seek usefulness, any failure lies not in our circumstances but in our principles and dispositions. We can serve our generation and please God in whatever state his providence places us. Let everyone remain in the calling to which God has called them.

Likewise, this should silence discontent or despair over our limited circumstances. Why murmur because we lack others' situations and resources? The Lord who withholds them sees the heart. If the foot says, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body," does that make it so? If the ear says, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body," does that make it so? What did Christ say of Mary? "She hath done what she could."

Though the rich gave much to the treasury, the poor widow's two mites were worth more. Both the man who traded with five talents and the one who improved his ten received the same praise: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." The man cast into outer darkness would have earned the same commendation if diligent. He was rejected not for having one talent, but for hiding it in a napkin.

It is good to see the rich generous, humble, and thankful, but the poor show equal grace when they refuse to steal or take God's name in vain. Those who know how to be abased are as divinely instructed as those who know how to abound. Some worship with the multitude; others are kept away by accident, sickness, or infirmity. But "in their hearts are the ways of them"; they too shall see his power and glory, as others see him in the sanctuary.

One can attend weekday evening preaching; another stays with the supplies. One woman edifies the public through her pen; another quietly raises her young family and fulfills life's most important duties. Both are equally respectable and valuable in their places, and shall part alike.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Moral greatness means doing ordinary things with a great mind—a desire to please and glorify God—not doing extraordinary things. It is open to all: a servant may be as great in the Lord's sight as a master.

In short, excellence depends not on one's status or calling, but on the fidelity and zeal with which one fulfills its duties—just as an actor's excellence lies not in the role, but in its performance.

*"Honour and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part—there all the honour lies."*

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 21, Evening), first published in 1854.