

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SPRING PURSUIT

BEING WATCHFUL IN LIFE AND FAITHFUL IN SERVICE

Session Seven & Eight—Ministry Reading

Who Then is the Faithful and Prudent Slave?

Verses for Pray-Reading:

Exo. 21:5 I love my master...I will not go out free.

Ministry Reading

THE MOTIVE FOR SERVING THE LORD

Believers do not serve the Lord because of outward encouragement or pressure from man. We serve the Lord out of the inward motivation of our love for the Lord. Our love for the Lord inwardly compels us to serve the Lord. It urges us to serve Him. Our love for the Lord makes us unable not to serve the Lord. We love the Lord, so we must serve the Lord. This is typified in the Old Testament by the slave who loved his master. Although the slave could have been free and did not need to continue to serve as a slave, he did not want to go out free because of his love for his master. He willingly remained as a slave to serve the master whom he loved. This is our motive in serving the Lord. We become His servants and serve Him willingly because of our love for Him. Our service to the Lord comes out of our love for Him. (*Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3, p. 445*).

MINISTERING CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL

If we would serve God in the proper way, we need to serve Him in the gospel. To do this, we firstly need to know what the gospel is, and then we need to experience all that the gospel includes...To serve God is to function as a priest in the gospel. This means that whenever we contact anyone, whether a believer or an unbeliever, we need to know his need as far as the gospel is concerned. For example, if a person is not clear about salvation, we must help him to be clear and even joyful in God's salvation. We need to serve him with the gospel. Others may be clear about salvation, but not about other aspects of the gospel. Thus, we must minister something to meet their needs. The crucial

point of the service in the church life is to minister Christ to others in the gospel. For this, we all must learn the elements and the details of the gospel, and we need to experience the full content of the gospel. Along with this, we must develop the proper technique and skill to minister Christ in the gospel according to what we have experienced. (*Life-study of Romans, pp. 547-548*).

THE BASIS AND MOTIVE OF CONSECRATION

Consecration is spoken of not only in Romans 6 but also in Romans 12. Why do we have to consecrate ourselves? Paul exhorted us through the compassions of God. What are God's compassions, and what are God's mercies? Romans 1 through 8 speaks of God's compassions and mercies. Doctrinally speaking, chapter twelve immediately follows chapter eight. God's compassions and mercies are covered in the first eight chapters. Formerly we were sinners, and God's Son came to shed His blood for our sins. Chapters three and four are on the blood; chapter five is on forgiveness, while chapters six through eight are on the cross. On the one hand, the blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins; through the blood we are forgiven. On the other hand, the cross is for the crucifixion of the old man; through the cross we are released. Thank the Lord that He was crucified on the cross to die in our place and He is now also living in our place. Based on these compassions and mercies, we are exhorted to consecrate ourselves to God.

Brothers and sisters, God created us with a purpose, and He also saved us with a purpose. God's intention is that we express the life of His Son and partake of the glory of His Son. In eternity past God had a purpose; He did not want just an only begotten Son, but many sons. Hence, Romans 8:29 says, "Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Then He bought us and redeemed us so that He could gain us. He gains us in two ways. On God's side, He sent His Son to die for us and to redeem us. As far as our redemption is concerned, we are His slaves. Thank God that He has bought us! We are those who have been purchased by God. God said to Abraham, "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed" (Gen. 17:12). Hallelujah! We have been begotten of God, and we have been bought by God.

We have been bought by God, and we belong to God. Yet He allows us to go free. As far as His sovereign right is concerned and as far as redemption is concerned, we belong to God, but He does not force us to do anything. If we want to serve mammon, He allows us to go, and if we want to serve the world, He does not stop us. If we want to serve our bellies, God does not stop us, and if we want to serve idols, He allows us to do so. God does not make any move; He waits until one day we say, "God, I am Your slave not only because You bought me, but also because I want to be Your slave willingly." Romans 6:16 speaks of a most precious principle of consecration. Please remember that we are not God's slaves merely because of the fact that He purchased us. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey?" On the one hand, we are His slaves because He has purchased us, but on the other hand, we are His slaves because we want to be such voluntarily. Brothers and sisters, as far as the law is concerned, we became His slaves the day that we were redeemed. But as far as our experience is

concerned, we become His slaves only after we consecrate ourselves. As far as God's sovereign right is concerned, we became His slaves on the day we were redeemed. But as far as experience is concerned, we become His slaves the day we willingly tell the Lord, "I consecrate myself to You." "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey?" (v. 16). Therefore, no one can be God's servant without being conscious of it. We have to consecrate ourselves before we can be His slaves. This consecration is a matter of our own voluntary choice. God does not force us, nor does Paul force us. He exhorted us and beseeched us. God will not force us at all. He wants us to willingly consecrate ourselves to Him.

Brothers and sisters, the overcoming life has much to do with salvation. When we were saved, we spontaneously had the desire to consecrate ourselves. The life we received compels us to consecrate ourselves. Every saved person has the feeling that he should live for the Lord, yet he does not have the strength to do so. Many things ensnare and frustrate him from living for the Lord. But thank God that He has given Christ to us so that we can consecrate ourselves to Him. When we were dead in sin, we could not consecrate ourselves to Him. If we continue to live in sin after we are saved, we still cannot consecrate ourselves to Him. But now that Christ has become our life and our holiness, we can willingly consecrate ourselves to God.

Mr. Panton once told about a black slave girl who was about to be auctioned. Two men were bidding for her, and the price was going up. Both of them were evil men, and the slave girl knew that she would suffer no matter whose hand she fell into. She wept and grieved. Suddenly another man showed up and joined the bidding. The first two men could not offer as much as the third one, and the girl was eventually bought by him. Immediately, he called in a blacksmith and broke her chains and declared that she was free, saying, "I did not buy you to be my slave. I bought you to free you." At that word, he walked away. The girl was bewildered. After two minutes she came to her senses, and she ran up to the man and said, "From

this day forward until the day I die, I will be your slave." Brothers and sisters, this is the love of the Lord towards us. We are constrained by this love to tell Him, "From this day forward, I will be Your slave." Brothers and sisters, God has bought us, crucified us, and raised us up. Since we have tasted of His compassions and mercies, we should consecrate ourselves to Him (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 2) Vol. 24: The Overcoming Life*, Chapter 12).