

Marks of True Spiritual Service, Part 2

Romans 1:10b-12

45-06

I invite you to take your Bible and open it with us to the first chapter of Romans. Romans, chapter 1. We're looking at verses 8 through the first part of verse 16 of this tremendous opening chapter in Paul's epistle to the Romans. Already we have been enriched in our study and we're barely into chapter 1. This is a monumental epistle, some feel the most significant and greatest of all epistles in the Bible, certainly one that defines most fully, most comprehensively the doctrine of the gospel of God.

Now in our passage, verses 8 through the first part of verse 16, the apostle Paul opens up his heart. And he lets us see the motives with which he serves the Lord Jesus Christ. No greater servant ever lived than the apostle Paul, except our Lord Himself. And this passage forces us to look inside and to see what really made him tick, the reasons that he was what he was, that he did what he did, that he thought the way he thought, and wrote the way he wrote. And apparently it was very important to him as he wrote this epistle to stop at the very beginning after just the introduction in the first seven verses and *unbare* his heart.

He had never been to the Roman church. He did not found the church at Rome. Most of the people there had only heard of him and did not know him personally, although as chapter 16 indicates, he was acquainted with some of them. But before launching into this masterful presentation of the gospel, which some have called the Christian constitution, he feels that because they do not have a personal relationship one with the other that he ought to open up his heart and let them see in, that they might better understand him and better be able to accept what he teaches.

And so, as we look at verses 8 and following, we see the quality of his life, the character of his service to Christ, the motives that moved his heart. And in so discovering, we find a pattern for ourselves. All Christians are called to be engaged in service to Christ. None of us is exempt from that. Best rendered is our service when we understand the apostle Paul and why he served the way he served, for he presents for us an unequalled example. He wants them to really understand his heart so that as they read the rest of the epistle, they'll sense not only the theology but the living breathing apostle behind it.

Now the key phrase in verses 8 through 16 appears in verse 9 and that key phrase is this phrase, "For God is my witness," and here comes the key phrase, "whom I serve with my spirit." Paul says I serve God with my spirit.

Now you'll remember that the word "to serve" here is the word *latreuō*, which is always used of religious service, always in the New Testament. And sometimes the word is translated "worship." Paul says I serve, or I worship, using the same word for either thought because the truest kind of worship is service and the truest kind of service is worship. And so he says, I serve God with a

service of worship and I serve with my spirit, or in my spirit. And what he means by that is from deep down within me. It is not superficial. It is not shallow. It is not external. It is not liturgical. It is not formal. But I serve and worship from the deep inner man of the heart. That's the way he served, from the heart. Unlike some of the legalistic Jews, unlike some of the ritualistic pagans, he served from the heart.

And that was the characteristic of Paul all through his ministry. And that is the model for all of us. We should never render God service that is external, superficial, liturgical; it should always come from the heart.

Now I really believe that this is the essence of what our Lord meant. And if you want to look at a comparative scripture, look at John 4:23 for just a moment. Our Lord made a very important statement. He said in John 4:23, "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

In other words, you cannot worship God with externals: lighting candles, reciting beads, bowing down, going through some religious ritual or routine. You worship God from the heart or you do not worship God at all. And Paul is saying the same thing. You serve God from the heart or you do not serve at all. I believe it involves the surrender of the whole man.

It is as Ephesians 6 puts it, serving not with eye service as men pleasers but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. It is doing God's will from the heart, not because you have to but because you want to more than you want anything else. It is that spiritual service that we saw in Romans 12:1 and 2, presenting your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual service, and not being conformed to this world but being transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may know and prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So, Paul is saying, "Look, I want you to know to begin with that I serve with my spirit, that my service to Jesus Christ and to God on behalf of the gospel is a wholehearted service. I'm in it all the way." This is a ringing theme in Paul's letters, by the way. Over and over and over again, he reminds people that he does not serve for any external reason.

Now there are some people who serve God for money, believe it or not. I guess they think they serve God for money. Paul didn't do that and he made it very clear that his motive was not money. In Acts 20:35, he says, "I've shown you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said it is more blessed to give than receive." Paul knew that Jesus said it's better to give than receive, so he says, I coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have served my necessities and them that were with me. He worked. He wasn't in it to make money. He had to work and earn his own keep as well as to preach.

First Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 24, he said, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's prosperity." Don't be in it for what you think you can get out of it. He didn't serve God for financial reasons. He wasn't, as Peter warned, greedy of filthy lucre.

Secondly, he didn't serve the Lord just because it was fun to do that (Believe me, for him it was

anything but fun), just because he gained some personal pleasure. In Romans 15:3, it says even Christ pleased not Himself. He didn't even do that which would bring him the greatest personal pleasure, and Paul didn't either. And he didn't serve just out of reward either. He didn't do it just so that he could stockpile some kind of honor. Because he says in 1 Corinthians 9, "Though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory of. If I did this thing willingly I would have a reward but if it's against my will, then it's a dispensation of God given to me."

In other words, don't reward me for doing it, I didn't choose to do it, God called me. Honor God. So he didn't serve for the externals of money and pleasure and reward and he certainly didn't serve for fame. And there are some people who are in the ministry so they can be famous. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:5, "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." He wasn't seeking fame.

And may I hasten to add, he didn't serve because he got pressured into it either by his peers. There was no peer pressure. I love what he says in 1 Corinthians 9:19, "Though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all." Nobody made me do this apart from God and my own agreeing heart.

So, over and over (And those are just some suggestions. You can find those same themes everywhere) Paul says, I don't serve for money; I don't serve for pleasure; I don't serve for reward, for fame, because of pressure. None of those external things move me. I serve because I have a worshiping heart. It's a sad thing when people's service gets all muddled up with those other reasons. He says, I serve with my spirit.

Perhaps you've heard the story of the old missionary who was returning home after many years of sacrificial service in Africa.

He was on the same ship with the then president, Teddy Roosevelt.

Teddy Roosevelt had been in Africa, too, for a few weeks on a big game hunt. The ship docked in New York. Great crowds greeted the president. The press was there to cover the story. The old missionary and his wife walked off the ship unnoticed, made their way all alone to a cheap hotel to spend the night before traveling on a train to the west.

"It just doesn't seem right," the missionary said to his wife in a rather bitter tone. "We give our lives in Africa to win souls to Christ and when we arrive home, there's nobody to meet us and there's no reward. The president shoots some animals and gets a royal welcome."

As they were praying before retiring, it seemed that the Lord spoke to them and said this, "Do you know why you haven't received your reward yet? Simple, because you're not home."

I think that's what Paul had in mind. He didn't serve because of some superficial temporal acclaim. He was willing to wait until he got home, the ultimate home, to receive what God had for him.

Now, let's go back to Romans 1. When someone serves with their spirit wholeheartedly, not as men pleasers, not eye service—that is looking around to see who's watching—but when you do it with a whole heart, what kind of service is that? And I think in these verses Paul gives us the ten marks of

true spiritual service, and they really act as a check list for all of us. I know in my own mind, I've been checking myself off on these for the last month as I've been thinking them through, the marks of true spiritual service.

And I ask you to test yourself. Maybe it's a service you render to your children or your spouse, the service you render in worshiping the Lord here at the church, in teaching a Bible study or a class and discipling someone and evangelizing; whatever kind of service, test yourself. Do you really give wholehearted service? Do you really give genuine worshipful service from deep within your spirit? If you do, it will be characterized by the following things.

Number one—and we covered the first three last time, just going to mention them to you—was a thankful spirit. In verse 8, "First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." One who serves from the spirit is always thankful, always finds plenty to be thankful about. Not going around griping and complaining and bitter because things don't go the way that they feel they should go. And even when things are tough, they're thankful. And by the way, as Paul was writing this epistle, there was a plot by the Jews to murder him. But instead of being upset and filled with anxiety over his own problems, he was filled with thanksgiving over what God had done in the Roman church.

But that is the way it is with people who serve from the heart. They are thankful people. They don't have to have everything. They don't have to have all the blessings. It all doesn't have to come their way. They can be just as thankful, in fact, usually more so, when it comes to someone else. An unselfish thankfulness; that characterized Paul and that proves to me that his service was with the spirit. So many people who purport to serve Jesus Christ, if they don't get the glory or the fame or the acclaim, if the church doesn't just do everything the way they think it ought to be, cross its "t's" and dot its "i's" with all of the regularity that they would like, they just can't handle it. They lose their ability to find something to be thankful for.

A second mark of one who is truly serving in a spiritual way is a concerned spirit. Not only a thankful spirit but a concerned spirit, verse 9, "For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." Unceasingly and always, that's redundant, but that's how it was with Paul. I pray for you all the time. I am thankful for what God has done and yet I am deeply concerned for what has yet not been done.

I can identify with that as a pastor. I thank God for what He's done in this church and yet I unceasingly pray to God for what I see that has not yet been done. And I think the intensity of prayer measures the intensity of concern. Paul had a concerned spirit. This is a remarkable statement. He says I unceasingly pray for you always, even though he did not found that church and he did not know those people. Most of us can't even muster up intensity in prayer over people we know very well.

We usually get intense only when something hits us personally that devastates us and then we get very spiritual very quickly.

But we are a million miles, usually, from the unselfish attitude of Paul, who unceasingly prayed for people he'd never even met that Christ might be perfected in them.

True spiritual service is marked by a thankful spirit and a concerned spirit and thirdly, a willing spirit. And I like this.

Verse 10, he says, "I make request as I pray, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you." In other words, there was such honesty and integrity in his prayer that he also prayed himself right into it as a solution. "God, I want to pray for the Romans and I'd like to volunteer to be the one You use to answer my prayer." Boy, that is the integrity of prayer. When you can pray for somebody to come to Jesus Christ, for somebody to be matured in the faith, and pray that God will make you the tool, then there's real integrity in your praying. Paul was a volunteer. Paul was the first guy to stick his hand up when somebody announced there was a need.

In fact, in chapter 15 verse 30, he says, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and the love of the spirit, strive together with me in your prayers." Let's pray together though we're apart and you strive at it. And what should I pray? "That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted by the saints and that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God and may be with you refreshed." When you pray, pray that I can come there. Oh, there's something so wonderful about that, praying yourself into the prayer and asking God to make you the answer.

It's the spirit of William Carey, that great missionary to India. He was bidding farewell to his friends and standing on a dock in 1793 and his friends were sort of saying, "Are you sure you want to go through with this?" Going to India in those days was, to put it mildly, precarious. Carey is alleged to have said this: "I'll go down into the pit itself if you'll hold the rope." I like that. That's the willing spirit.

I think about our Lord, who was willing to humble Himself and come into this world. And I wonder sometimes how willing we are to go. And we have all these little stipulations. I mean, we've got to have everything just right, you know, we've got to make sure we can be comfortable and have the right kind of car and we're all going to volunteer for missionary work in the South Seas. We don't like to go too far cause we don't want to get too far away from our friends and our family. And we have all these barriers that keep us from a willing heart. Paul is saying, "Look, I want these people to be changed, God, and I'm willing to go and be the instrument to see it happen." Next time you get on your knees and pray for a mission field, ask God to make you the one that goes. Be willing to say no to the comfort and the car and the good weather and the nice house and the friends and the family and whatever it costs.

Some people aren't willing to pray even. Some people who pray aren't willing to give even, let alone to go because it would mean sacrificing a luxury. I always think of John Payton.

His story is so indelibly in my mind because I read it in my seminary days and it just transformed my thinking. Went to the New Hebrides to minister to the cannibals, he and his wife and they had just been married not long. And you know, I can...I don't know how I would react to that if God called me to minister to cannibals. I don't know what my humanness would say.

"That's silly, Lord. I can't make it in the ministry. I'll go there; they'll eat me." Right, I mean, what's the point? "I know a guy who dropped out of seminary, he'll never make it anyway, send him there, they'll eat him, he'll be a hero, and who will know?" Right? I mean, why waste a good one? You can always

rationalize that kind of stuff.

But Paul with all of his passion and fervency is willing to be a part of the answer for that which he prays for. When you pray for the church of Jesus Christ and you pray for Grace Church, are you willing to be a part of the answer? A lot of people are willing to come and tell what the problems are. My response to that is usually, "Are you praying about it? And if you're praying about it, are you willing to be part of the solution?" The world's full of critics, but there aren't quite as many volunteers as there are critics.

Let's go to fourth principle: a submissive spirit, a submissive spirit. The end of verse 10, he says, "By the will of God." I want to come and I want to be with you and I want to be the instrument if it is the will of God. And he says the same thing at the end of the epistle, chapter 15, as I read, verse 32: "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God."

In other words, though he was highly motivated, thankful, concerned and willing, he was regulated by a commitment to the will of God. I think the Lord was his example, who said, "Not My will but Thine be done." And that is the way we are to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." We are to be conformed to His will. And Paul lived his life that way. He was utterly concerned with doing the will of God from the heart.

Sure, he was volunteering, but only if that's what God wanted.

You can trace, and I won't take the time because I want to keep us moving, but you can trace through Paul's life so many times when the will of God was the issue. But one that just comes to mind is in the twenty-first chapter of Acts and Paul here says, "And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased (or rather Luke says) we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.'" In other words, Paul was being told by everybody, if you keep going to Jerusalem, Paul, by the time you get there you're going to get in a lot of trouble, you're going to become a prisoner, you're going to get bound. And Agabus took off his belt and tied him up and did a little demonstration and the whole thing. And they said, "But we kept on telling him and telling him and telling him and Paul says to us, 'What are you guys crying about? Why do you keep weeping? I am ready not only to be bound but to die.' And they said, 'The will of the Lord be done.'" He lived for the will of God. And they finally resigned themselves to the fact that that's the way it would ultimately turn out for him.

In the fourth chapter of James, I think, there's another good word. It says, verse 14, or verse 13, "Come now, you that say tomorrow or today we'll go to such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain." In other words, we make our plans for the future, you're going to go do this and so forth. "You don't know what will be on the next day. For what is your life? It's a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away." It's puff and it's gone. "You ought to say, 'If the Lord will we shall live and do this or that.'"

In other words, the limiting factor in everybody's life is the will of God. The true servant is totally submissive to God's will. So Paul submits himself. He was resigned to God's will and it didn't matter what it brought him, whether it brought him pain or pleasure. And that isn't fatalism. That is confidence to know that God has the best plan. That's not fatalistic.

And so, Paul prays and he pours out his heart, but he says I only want God's will.

Now people always have trouble at this point. They say, "Well, he's praying and praying and he's saying ultimately, God, do whatever You're going to do anyway. Why pray?" This is always the tension. I think, and I was reading this just last week, that Dr. Barnhouse had a great illustration to convey something of the relationship between our prayers and God's sovereignty and will. Listen to what he writes.

"We will suppose the case of a man who loves violin music.

Okay? He has the means to buy for himself a very fine violin and he also purchases the very best radio he can buy. He builds a library of the great musical scores, so that he is able to take any piece that is announced on the radio, put it on his music stand, and play along with the orchestra.

The announcer says that Mr. Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra are going to play Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*. The man in his home puts the symphony on his stand, tunes his violin with what he hears coming from the orchestra. The music that comes from the radio we might call foreordained. Ormandy is going to follow the score just as Beethoven wrote it. The man in his living room starts to scratch away at the first violin part.

He misses beats, he loses his place, he finds it again, he breaks a string, he stops to fix it, but the music goes on and on. He finds his place again and plays on after his fashion till the symphony is ended.

The announcer names the next work that is to be played and the fiddler puts that number on his rack. And day after day and week after week and month after month and year after year, he finds pleasure in scraping his fiddle along with the violins of the great orchestra. Their music is determined in advance. What he must do is to learn to play in their tempo, in their key and to follow the score as it's been written in advance. If he decides that he wants to play "Yankee Doodle" when the orchestra is in the midst of a Brahms number, there's going to be dissonance and discord in the man's house, but not in the Academy of Music.

After some years of this, the man may be a rather creditable violin player and may have learned to submit himself utterly to the scores that are written and follow the program as played.

Harmony and joy come from the submission and cooperation."

Then Barnhouse says this, "So it is with the plan of God, it is rolling toward us, unfolding day by day as He has planned it before the foundation of the world. There are those who fight against it and ultimately are cast into outer darkness because he will not have in His heaven those who proudly resist Him. This cannot be tolerated anymore than the authorities would permit a man to bring his own violin into the Academy of Music and start to play Shostakovich when the program called for Bach. The score of God's plan is set forth in the Bible. And in the measure that I learn it, submit myself to it and live, or seek to live, in accordance with it, I shall find myself in joy and in harmony with God and His plans. If I set myself to fight against it or disagree with that which comes forth, there can be no peace in my heart and life. If in my heart I seek to play a tune that is not the melody the Lord has for me, there will be nothing but dissonance. Prayer is learning to play the same tune that the eternal God plays and to play it the way the eternal composer wrote it and meant it to be

played."

Maybe that helps you. God's sovereignty puts out the foreordained tune to be played. Prayer is learning to play in tune. But even when we're out of tune, it doesn't mess up the celestial orchestra. Fortunately we hear them but they apparently don't hear us when we're out of line.

And so, Paul says, I only want what God wills. You know, I hate that confessional faith thing that I keep hearing today where people go around demanding things from God. I don't know if you've heard this as much as I have, but I hate that. It is perverted. It is heretical. It is self-will that not only attacks the will of God but attacks the nature of God. And if you don't know what it is, just thank God and don't ask any questions. It's not worth knowing.

Paul sought the advance of God's glory through God's kingdom and God's will. So, listen, now. True spiritual service, and let's sum it up fast, is seen in being thankful for what God has done, in being concerned for what is yet to be done, being willing to be the one to do it if it fits God's will. That's the only way to live. That's true spiritual service. Those are the marks.

Can I give you a fifth mark? A loving heart, or a loving spirit, verse 11: "For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that you may be established." Why did you want to come, Paul? Why were you so concerned? What is it that drew you? I really believe it was not some personal gratification, but it was something that he wanted to give them:

"That I may give you some spiritual gift." And you tell me, what is the number one quality of love? What does love always do?

Gives. "For God so loved the world that God (what?) gave..."

That's what love does. Love gives.

And that's where we see the loving heart. I'm not coming because I'd like to tour the Appian Way and see the Forum and watch the chariot races. I'm not coming to see if I can take the city. I'm coming because I want to give something, not get something. Oh, how you have to go back to that.

I know in my ministry here, week after week and month after month and year after year as we preach and teach the Word of God, sometimes you can say to yourself, "Boy, you know, I wonder whether anybody's hearing what I'm saying. I wonder whether people appreciate the Word of God. I wonder whether they appreciate me." You know, you get that kind of a "poor me" kind of complex. "And they don't really understand the effort and all that's going." And maybe you feel that way about your class sometime or about the ministry you're involved in. But you have to remember that as long as you look at the ministry as something you give, you never have that problem. If you look at it as something you're going to get, you're going to get all twisted and warped. Paul says, I want to come because I want to give you something. I want to give you a spiritual something to establish you.

You see, Paul was reaching out. Just like in Colossians chapter 1, he really longed for their full maturity and he says in verse 27, "I want God to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom (and here it comes) that we may present every man perfect in

Christ Jesus." I want everybody mature. And in one other occasion he said, "I suffer travail (or birth pangs, pain) until Christ be formed in you." It pains me. I agonize over it.

I hurt.

I don't know that I can totally identify with Paul on that but I know what it's like sometimes to have a severe stomach ache, a severe pain in the pit of my stomach in anxiety over the response of people to the teaching of the Word of God. Because you want so desperately to give them something of spiritual value and sometimes, you know, they just don't seem to get it. I've often said some people come with a thimble and spill it on the steps going out. You know they didn't quite...they didn't make it out even to the car, let alone home, before dumping it.

He wanted to give them something. He had a great heart of love. In second, second chapter of 1 Thessalonians, I think you get a glimpse of this heart of love. He says in verse 7, "We were gentle among you as a nursing mother cherishes her child." You can't think of anything more gentle than a nursing mother and a little baby at her breast. That's how we were with you. "So being affectionately desirous of you," that's a very strong term.

The word "cherish" means "body heat, to warm with body heat." We warmed you with the warmth of our body, our person, like a mother does a little baby, and we were so affectionately desirous, we longed for your presence and fellowship. And because of that we were willing to have imparted unto you not only the gospel but our own souls because you were so dear unto us. Paul says, I loved you so much I would have given you my soul, let alone my message.

At the end of 2 Corinthians, he says in chapter 12 verse 15, "I would gladly spend and be spent for you even though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. If you hate me more for it, I'd still love you." He had a great love. And the main characteristic of love is unselfish giving. Such love always seeks the best, and so what he sought was some spiritual gift. Look at verse 11 again: "To impart unto you some spiritual gift." Now what is this? Well, it's the word "charisma," gift of grace, a spiritual charisma, *pneumatikon*, a grace gift of the Spirit. It means the source is the Holy Spirit. I want to give you a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Now what is this talking about? What spiritual gift is this? Well, the same term is used in chapter 5, verse 15 and 16 to speak of Christ, the great gift of Christ. It is used in chapter 11, verse 29 to speak of the blessings God gave to Israel, very general. It is also used in chapter 12, verse 6 to speak of the spiritual gifts given to the body, the gift of teaching and so forth and so on. So, it could be used of Christ. It could be used of the general blessings that God gives to His people. Or it could be used of specific spiritual gifts.

How is Paul using it? We don't know. I would tend to think that he's using it in the largest possible way. For some of you, I'd like to give you Christ. For others of you, I'd like to delineate to you the blessings of God. And for still others of you, I'd like to minister my spiritual gifts to you. I think it encompasses everything. He would present Christ, speak of the gifts of God's blessing, and use his own spiritual gifts to build the body. But what he wanted to give them wasn't physical, it was (what?) spiritual. I serve God in my spirit; therefore I want to impart unto you a kind of service to God that has in its very core the Spirit of God.

You know, I can understand this. I don't want to tickle your fancy. I don't want to entertain people. I used to... Somebody said to me, "You know, when you were younger, you were funnier." That's true. I mean, I don't know that I was ever particularly funny, but I was definitely funnier than I am now, if I was funny at all. And I guess what it finally comes down to is that you finally get to the point where what you want to impart to people is so much a spiritual reality that it's very difficult to play around in the superficial. And by that I don't mean that you're to be boring about it; hopefully not. But you realize that it is the imparting of a spiritual thing that you really are after, something deep. I mean, I can't...that... I can't see any point in superficiality. *Sermonettes* for *Christianettes*, you know. I can't see any point in just frivolity, book reviews, and whatever else. I don't know what goes on in some churches but what we want to impart is something spiritual. Love always gives the best it has.

For what reason? At the end of verse 11: "To the end that it may establish you," *stērizō*, to make you fast, to fix you, to confirm you, to strengthen you, to establish you. I want your feet down solid. Another way to say it: "For the perfecting of the saints," if you take the language of Ephesians 4. I want to give you something spiritual. And where is the source of all those spiritual things? It's out of the book, isn't it? They're all right here. You don't just pull them out of the air. Using the Word of God and the gifts of the Spirit, I want to impart to you something spiritual.

You know, as a pastor I suppose I could hold your hand and try to move around. In fact, I know one pastor who said his goal is to visit each person in his church once a year. Ridiculous.

But I mean, I could go around and I could hold your hand and come visit you and pat you on the back and do all kinds of nice things like that. And I'd like to do that. In fact, there are lots of days when I'd like to do that. But I don't want to give you something superficial. I don't want to give you something physical, something human. I want to make the necessary sacrifice to feed you the living Word of God because that's spiritual, that's deep, not cheap and shallow. So, you may say you love someone. But if you don't impart to them the Word of God in depth, it's questionable.

I remember a girl in our church who was a student at SC.

And she said to me one day, she said, "I learned a great lesson last week." She said, "I always told myself that I loved the little girls in my Sunday school class." And she had like fourth grade girls. I mean, who wouldn't love fourth-grade girls, you know? And she said, "I...they all had these little frilly dresses and little bright smiles and pretty eyes. I told myself I loved them, Oh, I loved them so much I wouldn't miss my class and I just love them." She said, "One day I was at a football game at USC on Saturday as I always went, and the Lord spoke to my heart about the fact that I was always at the football games on Saturday so I never really prepared my lesson until I just ran it through my mind on Sunday morning, and what I gave them was very shallow. And God pointed out in my heart that I didn't love them at all, because I made no sacrifice to give them something with eternal significance." And then she said to me, and boy, if you know anything about an SC student, "I'm not going to anymore football games." The ultimate sacrifice. "I'm going to spend time so that I can give them something of value."

That's where Paul was at. His heart of love wasn't just a sentiment; it resulted in wanting to give them a spiritual gift that would firmly establish them in the faith. That's the true spirit of service. You're not looking for some superficial goal. "Well, boy, I got that over with. Man, Alice, let's get out of town next week and get a break from this thing. Do you realize I've been teaching four weeks in a row without a break?"

I mean, I've got to have a little rest." Well, you better check your goals, your motives.

That opens up the next mark of true spiritual service. In case you're wondering, we're not going to get done with ten of them. You knew that before we started. But we will do one more.

I love this. Paul had a humble spirit, a humble spirit. And I see this again in verse 11, it's just really wonderful. He says, "I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that you may be established, that is that I may..." I mean, let me correct that. He says, "Let me fill that out so you don't get the wrong idea like I'm the great gift who's going to come in and dump on you. I mean that I, too, will be comforted together with you by our mutual faith." Isn't that good? He says I'm not coming in as the expert and I'm going to come and give some spiritual gifts. No, I...I... what I mean is I'll give you and you'll give me and we'll give each other. That's humble.

I guess there are some people who think they have nothing to learn. They've got it all to give. What kind of a spirit is the spirit of true spiritual service? A thankful spirit for what God has done, always thankful, always thankful. A concerned spirit for what yet needs to be done, always prayerful. And a desire to be used by God to do what needs to be done if God wills. And all of this is born out of a heart of love. Yet, with all of that passion and all of that desire, there is never a feeling of superiority, never lording it over them but rather the humble heart that says, "Hey, I'll come and give you some spiritual gift and I know in return that you'll give some back to me."

"You'll minister to me," he says, "as much as I'll minister to you." Look at that in verse 12, "That I may be exhorted, encouraged, comforted together with you by the mutual faith of both you and me."

John Calvin wrote, "Note to what degree of modesty his pious heart submitted itself so that he did not disdain to seek strength from inexperienced beginners. He means what he says, too, for there is no one so void of gifts in the church of Christ who is unable to contribute something to our benefit. Ill will and pride, however, prevent our deriving such fruit from one another." End quote.

From inexperienced beginners, Paul said, I'll receive something from you, too. You know, sometimes someone who is relatively a new Christian will come and talk to me and they'll say, "I...I don't know why I'm talking to you, I mean, I know there are lots of people that you should be talking to and you should be doing something else." People say this to me all the time. "I mean, you must be busy, you should...you should go and be doing what you should be doing and, I mean, you shouldn't be talking to me."

And I'm saying, "Why shouldn't I be talking to you?" "Well, I mean, I...I...I'm just...you know, I'm nobody." I hear that all the time, and the assumption that they have nothing to offer.

I had dinner with someone not long ago and they kept saying, "Oh, I'm so sorry to be telling you this, I don't know why I keep talking. I keep saying these things. I know you're probably not...I'm sorry, I apologize." And I kept saying, "I love this, this is terrific, I mean, this is building my soul, I'm having a wonderful time."

"Oh no, I appreciate you saying that but I know..." Really that happens all the time. "I know I'm boring you to death, and I just go on and on and on." And I'm having the greatest time of my life. I'm not

saying a thing and it's refreshing. And I'm just listening and somebody's pouring out their heart and telling me what God's doing and I'm loving every minute of it and they're trying to deny me the privilege.

One writer said, "Humility is that low, sweet root from which all heavenly virtues shoot." The humble teacher says let's learn together. I guess there's nothing worse than a pompous teacher who treats you as if you knew nothing and he knew everything.

The greatest theologian that ever lived, the apostle Paul, is ready to humbly learn from a bunch of new Christians in Rome that he'd never met. The humility of the pure in heart. The humility of the pure in heart.

First Peter chapter 5 verse 3, Peter says... back into verse 2, I guess, "Pastor (or feed) the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it, not by constraint, (not because you have to) but willingly, not for filthy lucre, (not for money) but of a ready mind (because you're eager), neither as being lords over the charge allotted to you but being examples to the flock, and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you'll receive a crown of glory that fades not away. In like manner, you younger submit yourselves to the elder and all of you be subject to one another (that's the one another again). Be clothed with humility for God resists the proud but gives (what?) grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore." The place of humility.

The indicator of a true-hearted servant: humble. What does it mean to be humble? You say it means to say, "Oh, I'm nothing, I'm less than a worm, I'm...I'm..." No, that's just dumb to talk like that. That's not humble; that's just dumb. What does it mean to be humble? To be humble means simply to consider the needs of others more important than your own. Jesus considered that our need was so great that He ought to leave heaven to meet our need. And He did it. And He humbled Himself. Humility is to look not on my own things but the things of others, to consider others better than myself, even those I teach.

What is the attitude of a true hearted servant? He's thankful, always thankful. Check yourself. Are you always thankful? Or do you complain and gripe? He's always prayerful because he knows that, although he can thank God for what has been done, there's a lot that yet needs to be done. And he's always willing to be the solution to the problem if it's God's will, so that he's submissive to that. And it all comes out of a loving heart that seeks to wrap itself around others, not only for what it can give, for what it can receive. That's the spirit of true service.

There are some more principles that I'm going to give you next time that are literally life changing for me as we wrap up this. Let me read you a poem. Listen to it.

I gave my service, but with a heavy heart.

And with it went but little love or trust.

He was my Master. I must serve or die.

So I gave my service for I must.

That is the voice of destiny.

Then o'er the dreary dullness of my road,

There came the kindling ray of better thought,

I owed my service to a loving God,

So I gave my service for I ought.

That is the voice of duty.

And lo, the master made my service sweet

And like a ray of glory from above,

There came the knowledge that to serve was joy.

And so I gave my service, for I love.

That is the voice of devotion.

And that's where we ought to be. Serving from the heart.

Father, so much to be done, so many to reach, to teach, to build, to mature, to establish. So many spiritual gifts to impart, so much to be mutually gained. May we serve with the spirit, that Your work might be done in Your way for Your glory. Amen.

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