

Lesson #9 – The Principles Related to a Correct View of Service.

Introduction

- A. We have often discussed together the all-inclusive plan of God the Father to give the Lord Jesus Christ the preeminence in all things.
- B. It is within this perspective that we must seek to understand all facets of Christian service. Everything in life and duty must all focus on this one goal - the exalting of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. This is an area where all of us need to grow. The opportunity and privilege which has been given to us is overwhelming. We can serve the true and living God by being His witness. The value of all of this has not really dawned upon any of us.
- D. In order to bring this honor before us - serving God - it may be helpful to recall the Great Commission.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

*Go ye therefore, and teach (disciple) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Matthew 28:18-20

- E. In this lesson before us we seek to learn some of the principles which relate to Christian service - so that we may grow in our usefulness to God. The importance of this in your life and mine is top priority.
- F. The basic passage for our study is Matthew 16:16-19.

*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

*And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

I. The Content of Peter's Confession.

A. The statement itself.

1. The confession of Peter was given in response to the question of the Lord Jesus. He had asked them (the disciples) to tell Him Who they thought He was.
2. The reply of Peter was undoubtedly given as the spokesman of the disciples.
3. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ . . . . he was referring to the Lord Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies which spoke of God's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. The word "Christ" means "anointed". The term was well known among the Jews. The confession was an acknowledgement that Jesus Christ was the divine Servant of Jehovah. There is no question but that Peter was here calling the Lord Jesus God.
4. It is also helpful to see how Peter explained his statement by adding the words, "The son of the living God". This is an unmistakable affirmation of full deity being ascribed to the Lord Jesus.
5. When the Lord Jesus was being tried by the Jewish Sanhedrin he was asked by the high priest, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" The reply of the Lord Jesus was "I am". Mark 14:61,62

B. The evaluation of Peter's confession.

1. The perception of providence, Matthew 16:17.

*And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

Observation: Here the Lord Jesus is stating that Peter, and the other disciples, were brought to the recognition that He was the Christ - the Son of God, by supernatural illumination. This is a testimony to the terrible effects of sin. We have been so damaged by the Fall that we no longer have the ability or desire to recognize the truth - even when God Himself comes to us. Paul spoke of this truth in I Cor. 1:18; 2:14.

2. The pronouncement of purpose, Matthew 16:18.

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Observations:

- a. The "rock" upon which the Lord Jesus said He would build His church - is the confession of Peter. The very foundation of the church is the truth regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God - made by those who believe that confession.
- b. The evidence for this position.

- 1) The terra "Peter" (petros) and the terra "rock" (petra) are different. The former is masculine and the latter is feminine. The former refers to a piece of rock and the latter refers to a cliff or bedrock. Therefore the Lord Jesus was not simply referring to Peter as a person when He said "... Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church . . . ."
  - 2) In two other places in the Scripture this theme of the foundation of the church is carefully described. In each case the reference is specifically to the Lord Jesus - the confession of Peter. (I Cor. 3:11, Eph. 2:20)
  - 3) In two other places in the Scripture the "binding and loosing" referred to in connection with this foundation is explained. Neither of these speak of Peter - but both refer to the "binding and loosing" as the result of a number of people. (Matt. 18:18; John 20:21,22)
  - 4) It is interesting that the symbol of the "key" is also spoken of twice in the New Testament. In both instances these are referred to the person of the Lord Jesus Himself. (Luke 11:52; Revelation 1:18)
- c. In this important passage the Lord Jesus is stating that He will build His church upon the truth related to Himself as confessed by those who believe in Him - due to supernatural illumination. This work, the Lord Jesus states, is His work and not even Satan or hell itself can stop it.
3. The promise of participation, Matthew 16:1?.

*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Observations:

- a. The "keys" or perhaps better, the use of the "keys" to the kingdom of heaven - are here spoken of as being given to those who confess that the Lord Jesus is the Christ.
- b. The two references designated above (Matt. 18:18; John 20:21,22) both speak of the activity of a group of people. Through their corporate involvement there is a "binding" (prohibiting) or a "loosing" (permitting).
- c. All of this speaks of how God has made possible the involvement of His people in the carrying out of His purpose. He here declares His plan to bring people to Himself and then to use them in reaching others - so that Jesus Christ would be glorified.

II. The Explanation-Application of Peter's Confession.

- A. The description of the gospel - it is centered in Jesus Christ the promised Messiah, Matthew 16:16,18.

. . . *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

. . . *Upon this rock I will build my church.*

1. The content of these two statements are very important when we consider the principles which define our service for God.
  - a. We recognize here the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ. Too often we place the church, or the Bible, or Christian service, or Christian experience - in the central place. If we are to honor God with our daily life and service - we must recognize the central place as being found in the Lord Jesus.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ .... Rom. 1:16*

*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I Cor. 2:2*

*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ .... Galatians 6:14*

- b. When the Lord Jesus spoke of the "rock" upon which He would build His church - He was speaking of the confession or testimony of Peter as a spokesman of the disciples. The foundation of the church is therefore - the person of Jesus Christ as made known in the Word of God.

1. The definition of Paul.

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*

*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. Ephesians 2:19,20*

2. The definition of Peter.

*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an Holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

*Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.*

*And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient . . . . I Peter 2:5-6*

2. One of our basic principles for successful service is here presented - we are to proclaim the centrality of Jesus Christ through a presentation of the Holy Scripture.

- a. The Word of God is described as being a source of spiritual life and that which God will use to bring people to Himself.

*It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. John 6:63*

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth .... Romans 1:16*

*For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.*  
II Cor. 4:20.

*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but, also in power,  
and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance .... I Thess. 1:5*

*For the word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper  
than any twoedged sword .... Hebrews 4:12*

- b. The Word of God is that which is used to bring us to salvation.

*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*  
Romans 10:17

*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should  
be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. James 1:18*

*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by  
the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. I Peter 1:23*

- c. The Word of God is that which is used to sanctify us.

*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. John 17:17*

*... Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, That he  
might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*  
Ephesians 5:25,26

- d. The gospel is often described in the light of what it produces in the  
life of the hearer.

*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto  
myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry,  
which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the  
grace of God. Acts 20:24*

*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye  
not many fathers, for in Christ. Jesus I have begotten you through the  
gospel. I Cor. 4:15*

*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren  
beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you  
to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the  
truth.*

*Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the  
glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. II Thess. 2:13,14*

Summary observation: All of these verses point up the great truth expressed  
by the Lord Jesus when He said,  
". . . Upon this rock I will build my church . . . ."  
He has given us His Word and will work through the  
Holy Scripture as we live it and explain it to people.

- B. The description of the believer's participation - all who confess the deity  
of Jesus Christ as the Messiah are involved in the bestowment of the keys of  
the kingdom of heaven.

*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Matthew 16:1?

1. These statements form important principles for our service for God.
  - a. This does not mean that any human has the gift or ability from God - or the legal right - to give or deny salvation or any spiritual provision.
  - b. This verse does teach that God has chosen to use, and to work through, those who believe upon Him as Lord and Savior. In their ministry of the Word of God - God Himself is seen as working. - When people give heed to the Word of God and repent and believe - this loosing on earth accompanies a loosing in heaven. When people refuse the gospel - the binding on earth is accompanied by a binding in heaven.
  - c. The evidence for this position, as noted above, is found in two other places in the New Testament. (Matt. 18:15-19; John 20:22,23)

2. In harmony with these principles the believer is described in such a way as to indicate his participation in the work of God.

- a. The believer is described as a source of living water, John 7:37-39.

*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*

*He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

Observation: The great truth in these verses is that God will reach into the lives of people through other believers. We must pray about this for ourselves and for ODB another. We must ask if we have the values, the priorities, the knowledge, the commitment that God can use? God wants to use each of us to bring life to others.

- b. The believer is described as an ambassador, II Cor. 5:20.

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Observation: As the ambassador we represent the true and living God. We have the ability and the right to speak to people for God. Our message is that of reconciliation. God desires to use us to bring people to Himself by our life and ministry.

- c. The believer is described as an example, I Thess. 1:7-10.

*So that we were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

*For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak any thing.*

Observation: It is important to see, in these verses, how the daily life of these believers was the testimony to and the exposition of the Word of God to others. How these individuals had repented, turned to God, served the Lord, and indicated their expectancy of the Lord's return was all an explanation of the message of the Bible. This is a reminder that God will use us as examples in the lives of others.

d. The believer is described as a priest, I Peter 2:5,9.

*Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ....*

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

Observation: A priest is one who has the right and the ability to represent God to men and men to God. Every believer, in the New Testament Church, is a priest. We can pray for others and we can teach the Word of God by daily life and explanation. The power and effectiveness of this cannot be expressed in words. God will use us as His priests - if we will make ourselves available.

e. The believer is described as a steward, I Peter 4:10,

*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Observation: The way God has given gifts to each of us makes it possible for Him to use us as a source of grace in the lives of others. This is done by means of the Word of God. God dispenses of His grace - through the believer giving out the Word of God in life and explanation - into the lives of others.

Conclusion: God has given to each of us a great and wonderful task. Let us give ourselves to our Lord so that He may use us to reach others with the gospel. Pray the following prayer each morning at the beginning of the day and memorize the verse for the day (or write it on a card and carry it with you).

The prayer: O Lord God Almighty, I bow in worship and praise before you. I thank you for your wonderful provision of grace in salvation. Thank you for bringing me to yourself and giving me the assurance of heaven. Please use me today to tell someone the plan of salvation. Enable me to explain my verse for today to a person in need of salvation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Verse for Friday - John 1:12

Verse for Saturday - John 3:16

Verse for Sunday - John 3:36

Verse for Monday - John 5:24

Verse for Tuesday - John 6:37

Verse for Wednesday - John 8:21:

Verse for Thursday - John 14:6