

Living for an Audience of One: The Most Precious Work God Does in a Man

This is such a high and lofty word that is a rare find in these days of shallowness and superficiality.

It's an article written by a young minister friend of mine with wisdom beyond his years. It is a works-saving word that contains the real heart of the Lord. I bear strong witness with the wisdom contained in it, for I believe it is the greatest work God does in a man. I read it over and over again. I turn it over continually in my soul. I grind it up with my spiritual teeth. I chew on it constantly.

I've preached and written much about this topic throughout the years. I have published three books with similar themes (*Soulsh Leadership*, *Purity Of Heart* and *The Journal of a Journey*). These are the ways of God that only men who are taught by God can truly know and understand. It is a hard lesson to learn, and it won't be learned without severe testings. Read it reverently and let the Spirit of God take you into the refiner's fire.

There is a refiner's fire for the Master's use. This authentic fire deals with the heart. It brings awareness of where the heart really is through the revelation of the Holy Spirit combined with various tests and trials.

"That the genuineness of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ ..." (1 Pet 1:7)

Pure gold is soft and bendable and that is what the refiner's fire does; it makes the heart like that. Pure gold shines the

brightest and reflects the light of God, and His kingdom. God's people who have gone into the refiner's fire make the most powerful witnesses on the earth.

Here then is the witness and testimony of an unknown servant of God:

I have a confession. I want to be great. I want to serve Jesus with all that I am. I want people to know that I serve God alone, whether it brings fame or ridicule. I am ambitious for advancement in the kingdom. I have tried to study and build a base of knowledge and contacts, created a resumé of sorts for all kinds of Christian activities and experiences that someone may find valuable, secretly wanting to be recognized for my contributions to the kingdom.

This is all a great snare and a stumbling block to me, and the Lord batted me over the head to get my attention. Having ambition and wanting to be great are natural to the human condition, and there is nothing odd about this. The Bible itself speaks of it, and God engenders our sense of destiny and greatness by unlocking everything needed within us to make our lives count for something, to give what the world cannot—ultimate meaning. But for a long time, I have had things very backwards and distorted. When I was an occultist, I sought power and greatness also. When I became a Christian, the greatness that Christ offers and the power of the Holy Ghost became tantalizing, so much so that I became a sort of modern day Simon Magus (Acts 8).

It is a common enough teaching in the church that to go up, you must go down. Jesus says in no uncertain terms, "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 23:11). Howbeit in the church-world at large, it still seems that the greatest among us have gotten there by being great in the same worldly fashion— the rewards are the same worldly rewards, the honor given is the same honor the world gives. And regardless of what the Scripture says, the example that I

have seen lived out before me in so many instances has been to seek to climb the ladder, sell your gifts, build your resume, and then you can become great.

Now let me tell you what God has shown me.

It was said by the early Christians: "Unless you make what is right left, and what is left right, what is above into what is below, and what is behind into what is in front, you will not learn to know the kingdom."

We know the kingdom of God is contrary to every way of the world. Let me tell you that the things the world exalts ought to be shame to the believer, and the thing that the world shames ought to exalt the believer.

"For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God" (Luke 16:15).

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-25).

Listen to this compelling testimony of a friend of mine, Daniel Clausen:

I have been working in a nursing home for seven years caring for the elderly. I make only as much as I require. I have been tempted to be ashamed of my work because it has some dirty business in it, because I've been there for much of my working life, and because I occasionally receive comments like "So you're still there, huh?" I understand the implications and what it looks like. People tell me things like "Dan, you're so smart, why don't you go finish your degree and do something for real? Be a teacher or something.", or "So are you gonna be a nurse or a doctor?", "Still just preaching at the prison?"

My secret thought has been, "C'mon, Lord! I thought I'd be promoted by now to."

This has been my great sin—either become successful in the world, or successful as a minister.

But let me tell you, my friends, the Lord has blessed me and exalted me already far above what I deserve, because He has not made me great in any worldly fashion, nor given me any worldly honor, nor have I received any great thing at the hands of men for any of my religious activities. Rather He has made me in the form of a servant, given me the task for, lo, these seven years, to care for those who cannot care for themselves. He has graced me with an environment where I must persistently put myself under for others.

I must be patient with residents who are impatient. I must be kind when they hit me or swear at me. Because of memory loss, I must answer the same question 40 times a day by the same person, each time as if it were the first.

I have been put in a situation where people are dying and seeing their last days and understanding the implications of a life without God. I get to tell the answer. I get to hold people's hand as they pass and prepare their cold shell after they have gone. I deal with the hurt families as they see their loved ones declining. Because the God of all comfort has comforted me, I may comfort others—both the infirm of body and broken in heart. I have been put in an environment that is highly exalted in the kingdom, which is perfectly conducive to creating and maintaining spiritual growth. I am blessed beyond measure.

I should have seen it sooner. The Lord has said, "Then He will say to those at the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you

did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

"Then they also will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not serve You?'

"He will answer, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it not for one of the least of these, you did it not for Me'" (Matt. 25:41-44).

So I have confessed to you a great sin I've had. But I have repented. I will not go down in the kingdom to go up in the world. I will not be ashamed of my profession no matter what people may say, because God has given me a tremendous honor to serve a forgotten, poor, and powerless people. If that will make me forgotten, poor and powerless also, so be it. For I am written in His Book, I have riches in heaven, and His strength is made perfect in weakness.

May He do with me as He wills. I won't complain or yearn any more. If I work in a nursing home for another 60 years, I will not gripe against Him one bit. I'm not even just submitting to Him in obedience; I am recognizing what I truly have. If He gives me another assignment in ministry, I will do it graciously and humbly. But I will not strive with the world's means to attain God's ends. No resume can gain me what has already been given to me. I am already in greatness.

*The unknown servant of God is **Daniel J. Clausen**, a minister specializing in apologetics, the occult and the early church. He is the author of several books, including How Gods Are Made, Does God Have a Son? and Invisible Kingdom. He spends his days debating, preaching the gospel and caring for the elderly and dying.*