

## 29. Our Work or God's Work

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr  
Thursday, 24 January 2008

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. -- Job 1: 21,22

We honor God with the size of our requests, and God considers himself honored when we request great things from Him. Through the psalmist God promises, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it," but that does not mean we should ask for selfish things or things unworthy of Him or ourselves. God promises that by His grace He will give us all that we need to honor Him in an unbelieving world; therefore, He encourages us to open wide our mouths so He can fill us with all we need to glorify Him.

If we reduced the size of our requests for God's blessings because of our unworthiness, our requests would always be smaller than they should be. In the name of Jesus Christ, we should ask God for great things because He is great in mercy; He has made great promises to His children; and His heart is so full of love that He longs to pour out great blessings upon us. And yet, if we are practicing sin, God first commands us to repent and ask for His forgiveness through His Son before we ask for other things.

If we love our Savior, we will endeavor to live righteous in Him so God can work in us. Jesus is our great Advocate, and He intercedes for us according to our needs and does great things in us to honor His heavenly Father. Because God saved us through His Son, He encourages us to come to Him with any request that is worthy of His name, whether large or small.

God can use us, anyone or anything, as a tool; much as we would use a hammer or saw to build a house. God used Moses and Pharaoh, but in radically different ways. God used Moses as His friend, and taught him to pray and ask great things of Him to bless His people. God used Pharaoh as an enemy, and brought glory to himself in spite of Pharaoh's hard heart. We need to ask ourselves how we want to be used.

Francis and Edith Schaeffer asked God to use them as His friends, and use them in any way He pleased to lead others to saving faith in Jesus Christ. God delighted to hear their prayers for money to build a chapel or to make a film series so they could spread His word. God granted them great things, because they wanted great things to promote His cause; and when God gave them great things, they praised Him and gave Him all the glory for His marvelous grace in Christ Jesus. As His friends, God taught them to rely on His faithfulness, His promises, His love, and His grace in Jesus Christ, and as they relied upon Him they received blessing after blessing.

Perhaps most of all, from what God taught the Schaeffers about prayer, we need to learn that we will honor God the most when we allow His character to shine forth from our lives. God will not duplicate a L'Abri for every Christian who asks to have that type of ministry in their home. God will not make every Christian into a "Christian celebrity" or give everyone who asks for it a television, radio, or writing ministry. But God will give every Christian the grace to reveal His character to those around them. In many religious and nonreligious circles today, to be called "pious" is derogatory, but to be pious means to show a sense of duty and loyalty to God, to our parents, to our friends, to our employers and employees, and to others who have a claim upon us. All Christians need to be pious in this sense. If we will ask Jesus Christ to change our character, attitude, and disposition, and manifest His true devotion and loyalty to God through us, then we will bring more honor to God than those who have or have had a "celebrity ministry" without the Christian character to back it up. All Christians can honor God by bringing forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And others will be drawn to Christ as Savior as we pray for the Holy Spirit to bear His fruit in our lives, because many unbelievers have become cynical through their disappointment in "celebrity ministries":

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature (flesh) with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Galatians 5:22-26).

We can become a friend of God, as Moses was, and be used by God as His friend, by walking in the Spirit instead of fulfilling our desires in forbidden ways. As we pray daily for God's grace and friendship, He will be with us in the good times as well as the bad, and we will be open to receive His sustaining grace.

Consider Job. As a friend of God, he honored God more than anyone else of his generation. God said of him, "There is

no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). And yet, in the spiritual battle, all the great things Job had were taken away from him: his children, his home, his wealth, his health, and the helpful support of his wife and friends. Job felt as though he had been abandoned by God and striped completely naked; and yet, by the grace of God he remained faithful to God and sinned not. He had to admit his ignorance before God, but in the spiritual battle he did not rebel against God. God used Job in a way that manifested His righteous character in him, and told Job's friends that if they asked Job, he would pray for them and bless them. If everything external is taken from us, or if our health fails, through prayer we will glorify God and maintain our Christian character in spite of everything.

If God so blesses us, and gives us a work that attracts the attention of others, God may allow us to be tested in special ways to bring Him honor. Through this testing, we can show others that we truly believe that whatever we have achieved is really God's work or achievement and not ours. This testing may be like Job's, when everything is taken from us. If we lose our ministry (not because we have sinned against God and man), or if our church burns, will we tell others how much loss we have suffered, or will we grieve and consider how much God has lost or suffered? If we have believed the work or ministry or chapel was really His and not ours, we will grieve because of the loss to God and the possible set back this may be in the work of leading many to salvation, and begin to pray for Him to be glorified and Satan defeated so many will still be saved. Sometimes we can be tested by the loss of things so we can glorify God and manifest His character and sustaining grace in these dark times.

As the Schaeffers were successfully showing How Should We Then Live? in seminars across America, they received one blow after another. Among their afflictions, Edith's father died, their new chapel burned, and its beautiful organ was damaged. In this affliction and loss, they passed the test and glorified God: they did not charge God with wrongdoing. The Lord had given and the Lord had taken away by allowing Satan to test them, and then the Lord overruled all for their good and manifested His love. Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that Jesus Christ and His character will shine forth from my life regardless of my circumstances or afflictions. Inspire me to ask great things and expect great things from you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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