

Something for Jesus

M. W. Bassford

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Introduction.

- A. As has happened every month this year, the time has come for us again to talk about the things that we're doing for God outside of the assembly, the service that we're offering Him outside of the box. Throughout this year, we've discussed many different aspects of service: what sort of things we ought to be doing, the role that everyone should play, and even what good effects we can expect to see as the result of our service. This morning, though, we're going to go bigger-picture than that and look at the ultimate effect of what we do. Ultimately, we share in the Lord's work not just for ourselves or our congregation, but for Him.
- B. This, of course, is not a new thought. Dedicated, godly men and women throughout the centuries have understood the work they did for God primarily as a way to please and honor Him. As a result, there are many hymns in our hymnal that explore this topic. One of the best of these is the S. D. Phelps hymn, "Something for Jesus." For those of us who've been associated with the Lord's church for very long, this is a familiar hymn. It's been around for about 150 years or so. Because of this familiarity, it's easy for us to sing the hymn on autopilot. We can croon our way through all three verses without ever having to pay attention to the words.
- C. When we do this, though, we do a disservice both to the hymn itself and to what God wants us to be. "Something for Jesus" is loaded with Scriptural concepts, and if we take those things into our hearts, they'll help us be the faithful servants that the word requires. This attitude of service is one that we must possess if we want to serve God. To help us develop it, let's look this morning at the thoughts of "Something for Jesus."

I. Verse 1.

- A. The hymn's discussion of this crucial topic begins in its first verse. The point is that Jesus loved us so much that He gave Himself to die for us. When we consider the sacrifice of Jesus, we can't be unmoved by that. Because He loved us so much, we love Him back, and we start looking for things we can do for Him.
- B. That's the way that the verse leads us to think, and from beginning to end, it's backed up by what the word says. Look, for instance, at John 15:12-14. This is an easy Scripture to blur through, but let's pause a moment and think about what it's really saying. The point is that when we obey Jesus, He loves us and accepts us as His friends. I don't think Jesus was speaking accommodatively here, either. I think it means that even when Jesus was on the earth, He was able to look into the future, see our desire to obey Him, personally count us as His friends, and personally love us. Likewise, Jesus didn't die for us as a big undifferentiated blob of Christians. While He was on the cross, it was His love for each one of us personally that made Him willing to endure such suffering and death. As Christians, we're not just hanging on the coattails of a plan that was meant for somebody else. We ourselves were the object of Jesus' love all along.
- C. When we understand that Jesus loved us personally and died for us personally because we are His friends, that transforms the way we think about our lives. Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. As deeply as we can feel anything, once we recognize the greatness of Jesus' sacrifice, we love Him back and start looking for ways to serve Him. This, folks, is the basic motivation we have to keep in mind as we discuss our service groups or any of the other innumerable ways we serve Jesus as part of this church. We don't encourage weak brethren, or welcome visitors, or visit the sick and shut-ins, or anything else, because I say it's a good idea. We don't do it even because the elders say it's a good idea. We do it because we love Jesus and we're desperate for a way to give back to Him who gave so much for us. That's what love does. Love serves. I don't go up and down my block knocking on the doors of total strangers asking if they have dirty dishes for me to wash, but I will—sometimes, at least—ask Lauren if she wants me to do dishes. Why? Because I love her and I want to do nice things for her. In our spiritual lives, if we aren't willing to serve in the way that Jesus asks, we really need to ask ourselves if we truly love Him at all, because the love of Christ within us will compel us to service.

II. Verse 2.

- A. The second verse of the hymn elaborates on this theme of service. When we sing it, we're appealing to God to give us the same faithful heart of service that Jesus had. If we possess that heart, its fruit will show up in our lives. In every day, we'll be able to point to some good deed we did and say, "Jesus, this one's for You."
- B. All of this, of course, is ultra-Scriptural. We see the importance of faithfulness discussed in Hebrews 3:5-6. In fact, faithfulness was one of the distinguishing marks of the life of Jesus. From beginning to end, without wavering, without letting up, He did the will of the Father. This didn't happen by accident. It happened because from His earliest youth, Jesus resolved in His heart to be faithful to God, and He was.
- C. As His disciples, we need hearts that are filled with the same resolve. It's easy to be a Christian for one day a year and show up for Easter or whatever. It's easy too to be a Christian for 52 days a year and punch our time clocks every Sunday. What's not easy is to be a Christian for 365 days a year, to get up every morning

and throughout that day, dedicate ourselves to the Lord first and to everything else second. And yet, that's what God expects. Just like Jesus, we have to be faithful from beginning to end if we want to please Him.

- D. Peter describes what this faithfulness entails in Acts 10:38. This little thumbnail sketch of the career of Jesus tells us what it means for us to be His disciples. The text doesn't say that Jesus went about not sinning. It says that He went about doing good. Brethren, if we are truly disciples of Jesus, we will go about doing good too. Don't get me wrong here. I'm all in favor of not sinning, but if all we do is merely avoid sin, we are not walking in the steps of Jesus. Walking in the steps of Jesus means that each one of us, every day, must be a powerful, positive force for good. We can't opt out of the service group system and say, "I don't want to do any of that stuff." We can't look at all the needs in our lives and say, "I don't want to get involved in helping." We can't say, "I do my part by showing up for church." God requires more. He requires us to do good.
- E. An important part of this process is what the hymn aptly calls "works of love." Our lives must contain not just words of love or expressions of love, but works of love. We see this in 1 John 3:18-19. Just like genuine love of Jesus doesn't sit around and do nothing, genuine love for our brother or our neighbor doesn't sit around and do nothing. We need to be honest with ourselves, brethren. We need to ask ourselves when the last time was that we did something for someone outside our own families that we can describe as a work of love. When was the last time we checked up on a weak brother? When was the last time we invited a stranger from church over for a meal? When was the last time we reached out in friendship to the new guy at work? In short, when was the last time we did anything for anybody? Yesterday? Two weeks ago? Last month? Last year? It's nice, I guess, to be able to talk a good game, but for us, love needs to be something that we live.
- F. Especially, this love needs to extend itself to what the hymn calls the "wanderer sought and won." If we are truly interested in giving Jesus what He wants, we will be active in evangelism. This, in fact, is one of the main purposes of our existence as Christians. Look at how Peter defines this in 1 Peter 2:9. God didn't make us a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, and so forth just so that we could sit around and congratulate ourselves on how spiritually cool we are. Instead, He made us those things so that we could proclaim the excellencies of Jesus. Now, there are plenty of Christians out there who are big fans of what they call "lifestyle evangelism." They say, "All the people I associate with can see there's something different about my lifestyle. If they want to know more, they can ask me." Folks, that's bogus. Let's be real about this. If all we do is just live a righteous life, and nobody asks about our righteous life, we have proclaimed exactly nothing. For all the people around us know, we could be disciples of the Buddha instead of disciples of the Christ. Proclaiming means telling non-Christians about Jesus, and if we act like it means anything less, we're just trying to weasel out of doing God's will. I understand that evangelism is a scary thought for a lot of Christians. If that's you, don't worry. We're going to spend a lot of time this fall talking about some things that should make evangelism less scary, and if we're trying to do the best we can, but we're just not very good at it, God's OK with that. However, we must be looking to save the lost as something for Jesus.

III. Verse 3.

- A. "Something for Jesus" explores the logical extension and conclusion of these things in its third verse. In this verse, we're singing about broadening out our service to Jesus so that it comes to include everything in our lives. Whether the times are good or bad, we're vowing to stay committed to Him. Then, after we've lived that kind of life, Jesus gets to claim our souls to be with Him forever in heaven.
- B. The first idea, that everything that we are and that we have ought to belong to Jesus, is an idea that we can find, among other places, in Romans 12:1. Under the Law of Moses, the children of Israel were periodically supposed to present sacrifices to God. Depending on the circumstances, these offerings could be anything from a small amount of grain to a young bull. Regardless of what they were, though, once the sacrifices were presented, they no longer belonged to the Israelite who offered them. They belonged to God.
- C. In the same way, we should view ourselves as living sacrifices. We don't belong to ourselves anymore. We belong to God. This is logically where the sacrifice of Jesus leads us. Because He gave Himself so fully and completely for us, we have to give ourselves fully and completely to Him, wherever it leads, whatever it takes. This doesn't change just because we're going through a busy time or a hard time. We don't get to take ourselves back from God's possession and say, "Oops! My mistake!" Instead, we are irrevocably His.
- D. If we live in this way, we will attain the reward of eternal life with Jesus in heaven. From our perspective, this is an amazing thing. Not only does heaven beat the alternative, it's a wonderful place to be in and of itself. All my life, I've been dedicated to serving Jesus, but only in heaven to I get the chance to see Him.
- E. However, not only is this an amazing thing for us; it's an amazing thing for Jesus. Look at what He says about His desires in John 17:24. Just as Jesus died for you personally and me personally, so too He wants to see you personally and me personally in heaven. He wants us there as badly, or maybe even more, as we want to be there. So, then, the final and most important way that we can express our love for Jesus is by living lives that will lead to Him having us for eternity. That's the last payment we can make on the unpayable debt we owe.

Conclusion. If you want your life to be something for Jesus, come to Him today.