

What Is a Servant?



Servanthood (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

We sometimes forget that the word “minister” means a servant. We can sometimes speak about being a minister as though it was rather an exalted, important position—which is a very false picture. This was brought home to me about three years ago when we went to Pakistan for ministry. When we went through the immigration the officer asked me what is your profession? Well, knowing it was a Moslem country I wanted to say something that wouldn’t give away too much so I said, “I’m a minister.” From then on I got red carpet treatment. I mean, everything. It only dawned on me later that he imagined I was a minister of the United States. See what a false picture we have given to the word minister?

Then you take the word “deacon.” Deacon means simply a servant, that’s all it means. But, many, many people who fill the office of deacon don’t realize that they’re servants. How different some churches would be if instead of having a board of deacons they had a board of servants. In other words, our carnal, human nature has misinterpreted much of the language that we use to describe our Christian walk and profession. So, I want with the help of God this afternoon to come back to some basics in relationship to being a servant. I want to make it clear that I’m not offering a set of rules, I’m speaking about a spiritual attitude which I call servanthood.

There’s a good deal of controversy in the church today about the theme of submission. Some are for it, some are against it. I can understand both points of view. I think it’s possible to be very one sided in teaching on submission. But, there’s one thing which I believe is an absolute imperative for every sincere Christian, and that is submissiveness. Not necessarily submission in a given situation but an attitude of submissiveness. I would venture to say that any Christian that does not have that attitude is seriously deficient in his spiritual character. I believe submissiveness is an essential part of being a committed follower of Jesus. It’s an attitude, not an action. It’s possible to refuse to obey, as the apostles themselves did, and yet be submissive. It’s possible for children in certain cases to refuse to do what their parents require and yet be submissive. But to be rebellious and resistant and self assertive and arrogant has nothing whatever to do with being a Christian.

The thing that amazes me about the Bible is that it presents a picture of God so totally unlike anything that men ever would have imagined left to themselves. Because I was a

philosopher I studied a number of different concepts of God which philosophers had arrived at, as they claimed, by reason. The remarkable thing was their concepts contradicted one another. One philosopher concluded that God was the only reality, another concluded there was no God, and there were many other views of God halfway between. Aristotle considered the mind was the greatest faculty of man and therefore, God must be perfect mind. And because he was a perfect mind he could only contemplate that which was perfect and therefore, his picture of God was mind contemplating mind—which left a lot of questions unanswered. Why did he bother to create a lot of other things?

But, the picture given in the Bible is something that no human being would ever have arrived at unless it were given by divine revelation. First of all, we have the paradox implicit in the first verse of the Bible that God is both one and more than one. When I say it's implicit in the first verse of the Bible, it's there in the opening words.

> "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The word for God used there is a plural word with the normal Hebrew plural ending. But, the verb "created" is in the singular. So, in those first three words you have the paradox that God is both one and more than one. In essence, the whole of the rest of the Bible unfolds that paradox and gives us a full revelation of the three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son and Spirit.

What I want to point out here in this context this afternoon is that submissiveness and servanthood are an eternal part of the nature of God. As long as there has been God there has been submissiveness and servanthood within the Godhead. They are not something that began when humanity was created, they are eternal. They were there in the Godhead before creation took place, before time began. And, they will be there in the Godhead forever and ever throughout all eternity.

I want to briefly point this out to you. First of all, the relationship of the Son, Jesus, to the Father. It's one of perfect submissiveness, perfect submission, eternal servanthood. Let me give you just a few texts. John 5:19.

> "Jesus answered and said to them, Most assuredly I say to you the Son can do nothing of himself but what he sees the Father do: for whatever he does the Son also does in like manner."

Jesus never initiated a single act in his life. The initiative always came from his Father.

And then in verse 13 it says:

> "I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is righteous because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me."

When he said "I can of myself do nothing" he indicated that he was totally dependent on the father.

Then in John 8:28–29:

> "Then Jesus said to them, When you lift up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things."

Jesus spoke nothing that he had not been taught by the Father. He did nothing of himself.

> "And he who sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I always do those things that please him."

That was the eternal attitude of the Son to the Father.

Then in John 15:10:

> "If you keep my commandments, [he said to his disciples] you will abide in my love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Jesus abode in the Father's love by always keeping the Father's commandments.

This was not just true in his earthly life, it will be true for eternity. If you turn to 1 Corinthians 15 Paul speaks there about the consummation of God's purpose for the ages. First of all, he explains the Father will cause everything to be brought into subjection to the Son. All his enemies will be brought under his feet. Then he goes on to say when that has happened then the Son in turn will subject himself for eternity to the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:28:

> "Now when all things are made subject to him [Jesus], then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

So, throughout eternity the Son in the Godhead will be subject to the Father. Submissiveness is not something temporary, it's something eternal, it began in eternity and it will continue throughout eternity. I think that should help us to have a different attitude toward it. We live in a culture where the word servant is regarded as demeaning. Nobody wants to be a servant today unless it's very highly paid and then they'll reconsider it. That's a totally unscriptural attitude. It has no relationship to what the Bible teaches. But, it's one of the many examples in which the spirit of this world has infiltrated the church. Many people in the church think about servanthood like people outside the church.

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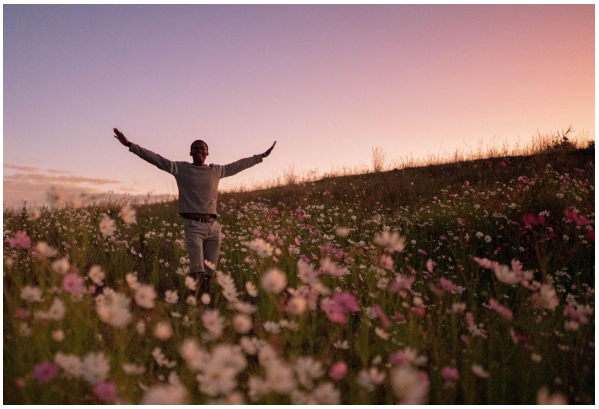

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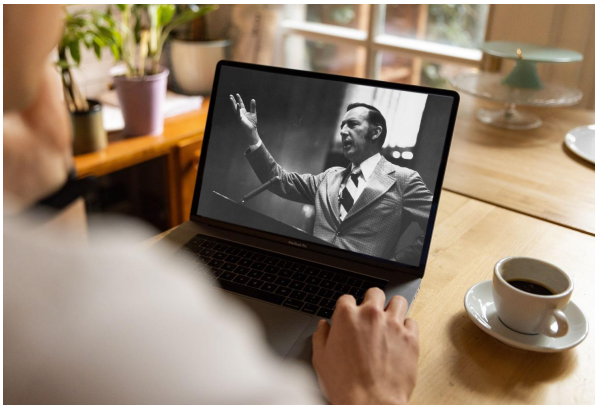

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