

CHAPTER THREE - A LOVER OF MEN

The Normal Christian Worker by Watchman Nee

Reading: Prov. 17:5; Mk. 10:45; Lk. 19:10; Jn. 10:10; Lk. 15.

Love of the brethren is a basic essential in the life of every Christian worker, but not less essential is love of all mankind. Solomon said: *“He who mocks the poor reproaches his maker”* (Prov. 17:5). God is the Creator of all men, and no person is fit to be His servant who dislikes or despises any one of them. Man has fallen, it is true, but fallen man has become the object of redeeming love; and the Lord Who redeemed man, Himself became man – a man like other men, gradually growing from infancy to full maturity. And when God had secured the Man of His desire in the person of His Son and had exalted Him to His own right hand, the Church was brought into being, “one new man” in Him.

When you really come to understand the Word of God, then you realize that the term “children of God” is not so weighty as the term “man”, and you realize also that divine choice and divine election had as their objective a glorified corporate man. When you see the place man occupies in the purpose of God; when you see man as the focus of all His thoughts; when you see how the Lord humbled Himself to become man; you then learn to appreciate all mankind.

When our Lord was on earth He said: *“For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Mk. 10:45). He did not say that the Son of God came to serve men; He did say “the Son of man came.” Here we see the Lord’s attitude to man.

A serious trouble with many who are engaged in Christian work is their lack of love for man, their lack of esteem for man, their failure to realize the value of man in God’s sight. Today we feel we have attained great heights if we have begun to love God’s children. But is that enough? Oh! we need to be enlarged; we need to see that our love must embrace all men; we need to see that all men are precious to God. No doubt you are interested in a few particularly intelligent people, a few who in one way or another are outstanding; but what I want to know is not if you are interested in men of unusual measure, but if you are interested in man.

This question is one of great importance. The phrase *“the Son of man came”* implies in the first place that the Lord was intensely interested in man; He was so interested that He Himself became man. To what extent are you interested? Perhaps you think, Oh! So-and-So isn’t of much account, or, There’s nothing much to such-and-such an individual. But how did our Lord look on those people? He came into the midst of men as Son of man.

He so prized man that He became man, that He might to the fullest extent serve men. It is an amazing thing, a grievous thing, that many of God’s children have little concern for men. Brothers and sisters, do you know the meaning of this word, “the Son of man came”? It means that Christ

cared for all mankind. What an abnormal state of affairs it is if we are only interested in a select few!

Interest in the human race is a basic requirement of every Christian worker, not interest in a certain section of it. *“God so loved the world.”* His love included all men, and so should ours. We must not confine our interest to His children, or to any other particular class of men, but must go out in love to all.

Years of instruction have accustomed us to talk of certain men as our “brethren” and of all men as our “fellow-men”, and perhaps we have begun to appreciate the fact that some men are truly our brethren; but do we appreciate this other fact that all men are our fellows?

Sadly, many who profess to be the Lord’s servants have never opened their hearts to all their fellows. If only it registered deeply with us that God is our Creator and we are all fellow-creatures, how could we take advantage of others in any way? If in association with our fellow-men we seek our own interests, our work will be of very limited value in the sight of God, however great its outward extent.

“For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45). *“For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Lk. 19:10). *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (Jn. 10:10). It was for man the Lord Jesus came to the earth, and He came for the specific purpose of serving men. It was His consuming interest in man that brought Him from heaven to earth to minister to men even to the pouring out of His life for their ransom. The motive power was a passionate love for men. His ministry to men was the outcome of His love for men; and because His love was boundless, He could serve even to death on the Cross.

If you try to preach the gospel to the unsaved, but have never been touched by the words “God created man”, so that you approach men as your fellows; if you have never had more than a casual interest in men; then you are unfit to preach Christ as “a ransom for many”. It needs to dawn on us that God created man in His likeness and set His love on man because man was exceedingly precious to Him. Unless man becomes the object of our affection we cannot possibly become a servant of men.

Many Christian workers have an altogether wrong attitude to their fellows. They consider them a burden, and sometimes they take offense at their doings and cannot even forgive them. How can we, who ourselves are sinners by nature, hesitate to forgive sinners? How can we fail to understand their weaknesses and shortcomings? And how can we but hold them dear when we know their worth to the Lord? He, the Good Shepherd, could forsake all and go out to seek one lost sheep; the Holy Spirit could search for one lost coin; and the Father could go out to welcome back one lost son. In the parable of Luke 15 we see that the divine love could spend itself freely to redeem even one soul. Can we fail to see the intensity of God’s love for man?

Brothers and sisters, in the light of God’s passionate concern for man, can you still regard your fellows with indifference? We shall be worthless in His service unless our hearts are enlarged and our horizon is widened. We need to see the value God has set on man; we need to see the place of man in God’s eternal purpose; we need to see the meaning of Christ’s redemptive work.

Without that, it is vain to imagine that puny creatures such as you and I can ever have a share in the great work of God.

How can anyone be used to save souls who does not love souls? If only this fundamental trouble of our lack of love for men can be solved, our many other difficulties in relation to men will vanish. We think some people are too ignorant and we think others are too hard, but these problems will cease to exist when our basic problem of lack of love for men has been dealt with. When we cease to stand on a pedestal and learn to take our place as men among fellow-men, then we shall no longer disdain any.

Some Christian workers who have been brought up in urban areas go out into the country among farming folk and adopt a superior attitude to them. How different from the Son of Man who came to be a servant of all! If you go anywhere to preach the gospel and do not go as a son of man, you will fail in your mission. If you work among others in a condescending attitude, do not deceive yourself into mistaking condescension for Christ-like humility. Conscious condescension is counterfeit humility; genuine humility is unconscious.

When Christ came into the midst of men He came as a real man. He lived as man in the midst of fellow-men. Many Christian workers, as they move among their fellows, convey the impression that they are doing others a favor by associating with them.

Our demeanor should never make others feel that we are different from them. Unless we can be as sons of men among men, we shall neither be true servants of men, nor true servants of God. God's workmen must be so emptied of self that they are unconsciously humble. An ignorant, unsaved man differs from you and me in no other respect than this, that we are saved and he is not. He has a place in God's creative purpose just as you and I have; he has a place in God's redemptive purpose just as you and I have; and he has a potentiality for God just as you and I.

Perhaps you say, the ignorance of others presents no problem to me; my difficulty arises when I come in contact with deceitful people and people of loose morals. What should be my attitude to them? You only need to take a retrospective look at your own life. Where were you when the grace of God found you out? And where would you be today but for the grace of God? If in any respect you are other than they, it is wholly a matter of His grace. Think what the grace of God has done for you. As you behold His grace you will have to bow before Him and say: "By nature I am as sinful as they, but I am a sinner saved by grace." A contemplation of what the grace of God has done for us will never exalt us; it will always cause us to bow low before Him. If you are different from others, "*who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast, as if you had not received it?*" (1 Cor. 4:7). The sight of sin should cause us to recoil, but we should still go out in love to the sinner.

While we bear in mind that every servant of God has his own special function, we should not forget that, however different their functions may be, all true servants of God are alike in this respect that they are interested, intensely interested, in men. If you are not attracted to sinners, but even want to shun them, what do you hope to accomplish by preaching the gospel to them? Does a doctor shrink back from sick patients? If we seek the lost because we have come to see the preciousness to God of every single soul, then we shall move out to them, not under the compulsion of duty, but under the constraint of an irresistible attraction. When we approach them in the spontaneity of love,

we shall find that a limitless field of service will open up to us, and in the mercy of God we shall become servants who are of some account to Him.

Oh, that we might see every human being as a living soul with an immense potentiality! How differently we have felt toward the saved since we realized we are “fellow-citizens with the saints”! And we shall feel a similar difference toward the unsaved when the divine light breaks upon us and we truly see each one as a fellow-man. We shall value them then and love them, and we shall come into harmony with the Lord in His desire to win them to Himself that they may be material in His hand for the building of His Church. If you or I despise any soul of man, we are unworthy to be in the service of the Son of Man, for His workmen are servants of men who count it their joy to minister to their fellows.

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