



Bible & Life

BIBLE TEACHING NEWSLETTER

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE & NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLY LIFE

Vol. 19. No. 5

Nov. 1, 2012

No Little People, No Little Places

Compiled from the writings of Francis Schaeffer

Christians in every age and circumstance have underestimated their value to God. They reason as such: "God has done a wonderful work in my life, but what can I accomplish for God? My talents are limited, my knowledge is limited, and my abilities are small. My life will ever make a difference for God." However, the Bible has quite a different emphasis—with God there are no little people and there are no little places.

Moses' Rod

One of the great lessons of the Bible is the way God used Moses' rod, an ordinary stick of wood, in the life of an ordinary man. The story of Moses' rod began when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, telling him to go challenge Egypt, the greatest power of his day. Moses reacted, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod 3:11). He then raised several specific objections: "They will not believe me, nor listen unto my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord hath not appeared unto you.'" And the Lord said unto Moses, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A rod" (Ex. 4:1-2). God directed Moses' attention to the simplest thing imaginable—the staff in his own hand, a shepherd's rod, a stick of wood somewhere between three and six feet long.

Shepherds are notorious for hanging onto their staves as long as they can, just as some of us enjoy keeping walking sticks. Since he had been a shepherd in the wilderness for forty years, it is entirely possible that he carried this same staff that long. Just a stick of wood—but when Moses obeyed God's command to toss it on the ground, it became a serpent, and Moses himself fled from it. God next ordered him to take it by the tail and, when he did so, it became a rod again. Then God told Moses to go and confront the power of Egypt and meet Pharaoh face to face with this rod in his hand. Exodus 4:20 tells us the secret of all that followed: *The rod of Moses had become the rod of God.*

Standing in front of Pharaoh, Aaron cast down this rod and it became a serpent. The wizards of Egypt, performing real magic through the power of the devil, not just a stage trick through sleight of hand, matched this. But the rod of God swallowed up the rods of the wizards. This was not merely a victory of Moses over Pharaoh, but of Moses' God over Pharaoh's god, behind which lay the power of the devil. Later, God used this same rod to provide desperately needed water at Rephidim when the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness.

"The simple shepherd's staff of Moses emphasizes that much can come from little, if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people."

Francis Schaeffer
(1912-1984)

“Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river; take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb: and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.” (Exod 17:5-6).

It must have been an amazing sight to stand before a great rock and to see a rod struck against it, and then to watch torrents of life-giving water flow out to satisfy thousands upon thousands of people and their livestock. It was not magic. There was nothing in the rod itself. The rod of Moses had simply become the rod of God. Consider the mighty ways in which God used a dead stick of wood. “God so used a stick of wood” can be a banner cry for each of us. Though we are limited and weak in talent, physical energy, and mental strength, we are not less than a stick of wood. Then, I can become useful in God’s hands. The simple shepherd’s staff of Moses emphasizes that much can come from little, if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people. The problem for each of us is applying this truth to ourselves.

No Little Places

If a Christian is consecrated, does this mean he will be in a big place instead of a little place? The answer is very important: *There are no little people and there are no little places.* God desires that our lives are wholly consecrated to Him in whatever situation He may place us. Consecration is more important than the place and His blessing. God must be the center of my life, in my thought-life, ambitions, vocation, and in every other aspect of my life. To live a consecrated life is to be “what” He wants me to be and to be “where” He wants me to be.

Nowhere more than in America are Christians caught in the twentieth-century syndrome of size. If I am consecrated, there will necessarily be large quantities of people, dollars, etc. This is not so. Not only does God not say that size and spiritual power go together, but He even reverses this and tells us to be deliberately careful not to choose a place too big for us. We all tend to emphasize big works and big places, but all such emphasis is of the flesh. To think in such terms is simply to hearken back to the old, unconverted, egotistical, self-centered *Me*. This attitude, taken from the world, is more dangerous to the Christian than fleshly amusement or practice. It is the flesh itself.

People in the world naturally want to boss others. Imagine a boy beginning work with a firm. He has a lowly place and is ordered around by everyone: Do this! Do that! Every dirty job is his. So, one day when the boss is out, he enters the boss’s office, looks around carefully to see that no one is there and then sits down in the boss’s big chair. “Someday,” he says, “I’ll say ‘run’ and they’ll run.” This is man. And let us say with tears that a person does not automatically abandon this mentality when he becomes a Christian. In every one of us, there remains a seed of wanting to be boss, of wanting to be in control and to have the word of power over our fellows. But the Word of God teaches us that we are to have a very different mentality. Every Christian, without exception, is called into the place where Jesus stood. To the extent that we are called to leadership, we are called to ministry, even costly ministry. The greater the leadership, the greater is to be the ministry. The word *minister* is not a title of power but a designation of servanthood. There is to be no Christian guru. Christians and church leaders must

***“ A minister, a man
who is a leader in
the church of
God must make
plain to the men,
women, boys and
girls who come to
places of leadership
that instead of
lording their
authority over
others and
allowing it to
become an ego trip,
they are to serve in
humility.”***

Francis Schaeffer
(1912-1984)

reject this temptation constantly and carefully. A minister, a man who is a leader in the church of God, *must* make plain to the men, women, boys and girls who come to places of leadership that instead of lording their authority over others and allowing it to become an ego trip, they are to serve in humility. When Jesus said, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt 23:11), He was not speaking in hyperbole or uttering a romantic idiom. Jesus Christ is the realist of all realists, and when He says this to us, He is telling us something specific we are to do. Jesus gave us a tremendous example:

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He arose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded... You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:3-5, 13-17).

Note that Jesus says that if we do these things there will be happiness. It is not just knowing these things that brings happiness, it is doing them. Throughout Jesus’ teaching these two words *know* and *do* occur constantly, and always in that order. We cannot do until we know, but we can know without doing. The house built on the rock is the house of the man who knows and does. The house built on the sand is the house of the man who knows but does not do.

Christ washed the disciples’ feet and dried them with the towel with which he was girded, that is, with his own clothing. He intended this to be a practical example of the mentality and action that should be seen in the people of God.

Taking the Lowest Place

Jesus commands Christians to seek consciously the lowest place. All of us—pastors, teachers, professional religious workers and non-professional included—are tempted to say, “I will take the larger place because it will give me more influence for Jesus Christ.” Both individual Christians and Christian organizations fall prey to the temptation of rationalizing this way as we build bigger and bigger empires. But according to the Scripture this is backwards. We should consciously seek to take the lowest place. Let me suggest two reasons why we ought not grasp the larger place. First, we should seek the lowest place because there it is easier to be quiet before the face of the Lord; and the little places, where I can more easily be close to God, should be my preference. If by taking a bigger place, our quietness with God is lost, then to that extent our fellowship with Him is broken and we are living in the flesh. The final result will not be as great, no matter how important the larger place may look in the eyes of other men or in our own eyes. Always there will be a battle, always we will be less than perfect, but if a place is too big and too active for our present spiritual condition, then it is too big. So we must not go out beyond our depth. Take the smaller place so you have quietness before God. I am not talking about laziness; let me make that clear. That is something else, something, too, which God hates. I am not talking about copping out or dropping out. God’s people are to be active

“Jesus commands Christians to seek consciously the lowest place. All of us—pastors, professional religious workers...—are tempted to say, ‘I will take the larger place because it will give me more influence for Jesus Christ.’ Christians fall prey to the temptation of rationalizing this way as we build bigger and bigger empires... We should consciously seek to take the lowest place.”

Francis Schaeffer
(1912-1984)

BIBLE Newsletter

and life



FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #6658
TAMPA, FL

Bible & Life Ministries, Inc.
3116 Gulfwind Dr., Land O' Lakes, FL 34639

November 2012

INFORMATION

Bible and Life is published periodically and sent out free of charge and is supported entirely by the free will offerings of the Lord's people. Checks should be made out to "Bible and Life Ministries, Inc."

Correspondence should be sent to:

BIBLE & LIFE Newsletter
c/o David Dunlap
3116 Gulfwind Drive
Land O' Lakes, FL 34639
(813) 996-1053

e-mail
david@dunlap@earthlink.net

web site
www.bibleandlife.org

Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bible-Life/139555992799868>

not seeking, on account of some false mystical concept, to sit constantly in the shade of a rock. There is no monasticism in Christianity. We are talking about quietness before God as we are in His place for us. The size of the place is not important but the consecration in that place is.

We all have egoistic pressures inside us. We may have substantial victories over them and we may grow, but we never completely escape them in this life. The pressure is always there deep in my heart and soul, needing to be faced with honesty. These pressures are evident in the smallest of things as well as the greatest. I have seen fights over who was going to be the president of a Sunday school class composed of three members. The temptation has nothing to do with size. It comes from a spirit, a mentality, inside us. The person in leadership for leadership's sake is returning to the way of the world, like the boy dusting off the boss's chair and saying, "Someday I'll sit in it, and I'll make people jump."

One of the loveliest incidents in the early church occurred when Barnabas concluded that Paul was the man of the hour and then had to seek him out in Tarsus, his own little place. Paul was not up there promoting himself. When Paul called himself "the chief of sinners..." (1 Tim 1:15), he was not articulating a form of false humility. Paul, the man of leadership for the whole Gentile world, was perfectly willing to be in Tarsus until God said to him, "This is the moment."

Being a Rod of God

Each Christian is to be a rod of God in the place of God for him. We must remember throughout our lives that in God's sight there are no little people and no little places. Only one thing is important: to be consecrated persons in God's place for us, at each moment. There will be many persons who were sticks of wood that stayed close to God and were quiet before Him, and were used in power by Him in a place which looks small to men.