

# GRACE GAZETTE

Volume XX

Issue 50

*Published occasionally for mourners in Zion*

*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* *Hebrews 12:12-13*

---

## MINISTRY

*But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* *Matthew 20:26-28*

In order to discuss the subject of “ministry” among the saints of GOD, it is necessary to begin with an in depth look at the greatest MINISTER who has ever lived. JESUS CHRIST came into the world for the purpose of “ministering” to HIS church whose names are written in Heaven. (see Heb.12:23) Any “ministry” which does not follow HIS example, is woefully short of that to which the saints of GOD are called.

The Greek word that is most often used in the NT for the English words “minister”, “ministry”, or “ministers” is the root word for the term “deacon”. We understand that those who are called to be “deacons” in the church are “servants”. Yet a man does not have to occupy the “office” of a “deacon” to be a “servant” of his brethren in the LORD. The LORD JESUS did not wait for HIS brethren to serve HIM, but rather HE moved to serve them. HE illustrated this quite clearly when HE girded HIMSELF with a towel and washed the feet of HIS disciples. HIS humility was on display in those actions. Some have thought that by going through that activity is, itself, an act of service, yet quite often it is but a religious deed which is done more for tradition’s sake rather than as a demonstration of true humility. That humility which CHRIST displayed, did not end when the last foot was washed, but was merely an expression of HIS continual attitude towards those that HE loved.

HE manifested HIS servitude when HE healed those that were sick, raised the dead to life, and gave sight to the blind. HE was under no obligation to do any of those things, yet for the great love that HE had for sinners, HE used HIS power to do good. We know of none who have that same power to heal men of physical ailments, yet all of GOD’s children are called to use the “power” that they do have for the benefit of their brothers and sisters in CHRIST. *“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (1Cor 12:27) “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:2)*

HIS “ministry” to HIS people in no wise depended upon the display of their gratitude. In point of fact, HE demonstrated HIS servitude to those who were unthankful, ignorant of HIS message, and had little respect to HIS goodness to them. Our sinful flesh often recoils when we have made overtures of kindness to someone who then has no regard to it. HE went about doing good because HE is good. *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Mat 5:44) “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (1Pet 2:23)* The sons of GOD are surely not our “enemies” but sometimes the actions (or non-actions) of their flesh might stir us up to be less than kind and helpful. Oh to be like HIM who did good for those whom HE loved because they are HIS brethren!

HE ministered the WORD which was given to HIM by HIS FATHER, without any thought of HIS own benefit or the reception of it by those to whom HE declared it. HIS purpose was the benefit of those to whom HE gave the WORD. Thus HE “fed” the multitudes at HIS own expense, praying for those to whom HE gave it. HE made no demands upon them but clearly stated the truth without apology knowing that HIS FATHER would reveal the word to HIS children and hide it from those who were not.

While HIS servitude was on display in every action which HE undertook, the greatest manifestation of HIS “*ministry*” was seen as HE laid down HIS life for HIS brethren’s sake as HE gave HIS “*life a ransom for many.*” HE came into the world to fulfill the purpose of HIS FATHER to redeem that bride which was chosen in HIM and given to HIM from the foundation of the world. For them HE prayed. For them HE suffered. For them HE died a shameful death, all for the great love which HE had for them. They could add nothing to HIM nor in any wise deserve this most unspeakable gift, yet “*for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” (Heb 12:2) Such selflessness could have never been demonstrated by any tainted with sin. Yet HE who had no sin and thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD gladly paid a price which only HE could pay to redeem that which was HIS.

We could never imitate HIM in this, but we can learn a great deal about the nature of the “*ministry*” to which the saints are called as we are reminded that HE loved not HIS life even unto death for the sake of HIS brethren. This is at the very root of that exhortation which Paul makes when he says; “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” (Php 2:3) “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*” (Rom 12:10) John sums up the basis of the “*ministry*” of the saints to one another when he writes, “*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*” (1John 4:9-11) True New Testament “*ministry*” is thus set forth.

Sadly, some have co-opted the term “*ministry*” to be encapsulated in the speaking gifts given to some of the saints. We often hear men speak about being “*in the ministry*”, or being “*ministers*” because they have been gifted to teach or preach the Word. It goes without saying that the exercise of such gifts can and should be a “*ministry*”, for the LORD has given such gifts for the edification of HIS body, the church. Yet as we read what Paul taught the Ephesians, we can see that these gifts are given to the church, not as the exclusive “*ministry*”, but rather for the building up of the saints, that each one might perform the “*work of the ministry*” to the whole body. “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for (i.e.; unto) the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*” (Eph 4:11-12)

His instruction of the Church at Corinth bears this out. “*But the manifestation (i.e.; various gifts) of the Spirit is given to every man (i.e.; each individual) to profit withal (i.e.; the whole body).*” (1Cor 12:7) Now all men are not given the gift of preaching or teaching, but they are no less called as the saints of GOD to the “*work of the ministry*”. Having said that, I find no prohibition against any man speaking in the assembly as the LORD may lead him. There are no “*requirements*” that qualifies a man to set forth the word of GOD. Paul does give some guidelines to the Corinthians about this matter but there is certainly no reason that any need ask permission of another to declare what the LORD may have taught him or what burden may be upon his heart and mind. Yet we must remember that the “*work of the ministry*” is more than “*speaking*” in the meeting. Speaking in the assembly is not a time or place to exalt any but the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The “*work of the ministry*” is one of encouragement. “*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*” (1Thes 5:11) It seems well-nigh impossible to carry out such ministry if one should disregard the regular assembling of the saints. (see Heb.10:25) Are not the saints encouraged as they behold the mutual faith of their brethren and fellowship together.

The “*work of the ministry*” is one of bearing one another’s burdens. “*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*” (Rom 15:1) Where better can such be carried out than in gathering together to pray, making our requests known unto the LORD and worshipping HIM in one accord.

The “*work of the ministry*” is one of exhortation. “*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*” (1Thes 5:14) We are in constant need of being reminded who we are in CHRIST and that we are bought with HIS blood.

The “*work of the ministry*” is one of service. “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*” (Gal 5:13-14) Are you a minister? mam