

GOD'S SERVANT

(Bro. Bakht Singh: Balance of Truth 1957)

Preparation:

This message is primarily intended for those who are in the Lord's service, who have heard the call of God to serve Him and to give all that they have to Him. Secondly it is not for those who have a real and sincere desire to be used of the Lord even though they are not able to give their whole time to His service. There are some who have not heard a call to give up their jobs, but they have a clear consciousness of God's desire for them to be such as can be used by Him.

Now because this message is meant for those in the Lord's service it is necessary first that you should be very clear and sure in your calling for God's service. Some of you may have been used by God during the past weeks, months or years in greater or lesser measure and there may be a tendency to be satisfied because of what has happened in the past. Let us remember, however, that there is still greater blessing and fruitfulness in store for all of us, in a greater and enlarged ministry. God wants us to bring forth "much fruit" and there are times when by some means or other He reminds us of past mistakes, that these may be brought before the Lord, and confessed. By this means those very same weaknesses faced and overcome in His strength can enable us to be more useful in the future. Such experiences can be compared to a very costly handkerchief which has been spoiled by a drop of ink on it. Let however that spoiled handkerchief be given to an artist, and that very spot can be changed into a beautiful flower. In this way, the costly but spoiled handkerchief becomes still more valuable and in the same way when we are faithful and sincere in confessing our failures and mistakes, these very mistakes can be used of the Lord to increase our fruitfulness. Once in a very wealthy home lot of guests and great persons came to stay for a week and the mother told her children not to ask for anything at meal times or at any other time. She knew that when children see many good things on the table they become very impatient and want things before the time. So she told the children not to ask for anything while the guests were there. One small girl, however, became very impatient, and could not wait so long. One day she took something from the table herself, so the mother told her to leave the table and go to the corner, where she had to stand with her face to

the wall and window. The poor child shed many tears because of this punishment, but nobody noticed her. In the party, however, there was a very clever artist and when all were asleep he came downstairs with his brush and paints, and the very same corner where the child had stood, he drew a beautiful design.

Next morning when the guests came for breakfast, they saw a change in the corner, and before they had food, they went to admire the beauty and scenery of the wall-painting. The guests understood why the picture had been drawn there, and from that day, the child was given much more love, because through her punishment others had been benefited. In the same way even though you have made mistakes do not be ashamed to face them before the Lord, because they can be used of Him in blessing to yourself and others. As we look into God's Word we will see our mistakes and faults and the reasons why certain weaknesses have come into our lives. Let us then be ready to admit and confess all our mistakes and faults as the Holy Spirit opens up to us the Word of God. All of us have so much to learn and so much to understand, and so often we find those who do not know anything, thinking that they know everything. There was once a man who was very fond of reading, and he once prepared a list of more than 6000 books by well-known scholars, thinking that if he could read all these books, he would become a wise man. After studying those well-known books for many years he was asked by his friends what he had learned by so doing. He replied "I have learned that I know nothing!" We too must remember that if we are learning anything from God, we shall study for many years, and learn many precious lessons, but shall admit in the end how little we know, and how much more we need to learn.

It is not good to try to look back on the past blessing of a past ministry. Whatever God has wrought in the past, must be remembered only in praise, and not as a substitute for present zeal and fruitfulness. God is able to give a future ministry of greater blessing and still more effectiveness. But first of all, it is necessary for each one to be very very clear of His call. Just by telling the people we meet that we are God's servant or an evangelist, or a preacher does not make us one. We must be able to prove that we are called by God. If we are depending upon some dream, that even is no proof. We can see from God's Word that we have to be able to prove to everybody how and when and where we have been called by God. We have to be sure that we have heard the voice of God, and that it is God Himself who has called

and is preparing us for our ministry, so much so that even when being offended or angered, we shall be able to convince people that we are God's servants and are in His service. We must be able to give a definite proof that we have been called by God.

Amongst the military those who have been selected for a commission as Lt. or Capt., have to appear before the committee for an interview. Even if a young man is already qualified, and has passed many exams, and comes from a good family, he has to appear before this committee to be finally selected for that office. Once a young man from a good family and well educated came for that interview. There were three or four committee members interviewing the candidates, and as the young man came into the room, one of these said to him: "Will you go and get me a cup of tea?" So the young man ran to the hotel nearby, and brought nice tea on a nice tray. He spent much money, and brought all things which he thought would please the committee members. As soon as he came inside carrying these things the members said to him: "You are unfit to be an officer." "Why?" he asked and they answered: "If you want to be an officer you ought to have told the servant to carry the tray and not carried it yourself, because, officers should not demean themselves like this. You have forgotten your status, and are fit rather to be a server than an officer." So he was not appointed, even though he was well educated and from a good family and with every other circumstance in his favour. In the same way for divine service there must be divine authority. Just by saying you saw a dream or vision or heard a voice will not satisfy anybody that you are God's servant. You have got to be prepared and proven before all, that there is divine authority behind you.

In the story of Elijah we see how God, at that time had to meet a very urgent and important need. The wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were trying to kill all God's servants and prophets. Even after God had revealed Himself in a mighty miracle through Elijah by sending fire on the sacrifice, this Jezebel was still determined to kill him. How much darkness prevailed in the kingdom? Everywhere there was grove and idol worship and every kind of corruption among kings and priests. Here was an urgent need to give God's word and message to his people, but even the mighty man Elijah did not know how God was going to meet that need. But though Elijah did not know, God already knew through whom He was going to meet the need. God sent Elijah to Elisha, because God knew **all** about him before Elijah knew anything about him. Elijah had been saying "Take my life away. When there is

sin everywhere what is the use of one man struggling alone." But God showed Elijah, that he had already been working unknown to him. Elisha was going about his ordinary daily work, until he was called. But he was doing that work faithfully. He was in the field ploughing with the oxen. He was not found sitting and dreaming under a tree. He was occupied in active service, and it was during the course of this daily life that God called him.

You too may have had some kind of occupation before you began to preach the gospel. It may have been a job in the field, the village, or town. No one needs to know what it was, but it is certainly necessary to know if you were doing that job faithfully. If you were a farmer before you became a preacher, can you say that you were doing your farming faithfully, or as a teacher, were you faithful in your teaching? If you were a shop-keeper, were you faithful in your business? Have you been faithful in your home life? Can you say truthfully that whatever job was given to you in your home or outside you were faithful in it? You must answer this question truthfully because your faithfulness in small or ordinary things will have a great bearing upon your future ministry.

It may be that after some years of experience of new birth, God called you for His service. It is good to look back sometimes at the work you were doing before you began to preach the gospel and ask yourself how faithful you were in **that** work, and wherein you may have failed sometimes you may be thinking: "Though I have been faithful to God, yet He is making me to go through these trials." Ask yourself rather: "Was I always faithful in that which was least?" But do not despair. God is able to make you faithful now though you may have failed in the past.

The service of God is the most important work which any man can do. God is never in a hurry. Before He calls a man He prepares him for His service, and this preparation may take many years. Do not think that God can give you a short course and make you fully qualified. Some people want a short cut to God's service. When I joined college in London, one day the registrar of the office called me and wanted to know what opinion our boys in India have about Universities. I asked him the reason for such a question. He told me that somebody from India had written to him that he wanted to become an engineer and that he wanted to finish the course in a few weeks. The young man had also wanted to know the amount of money that he

should send for this course. There are many like that who think without studying they can become engineers. We do not know how they get that idea but it is a fact that many think that because they are the sons of wealthy men they can get through an engineering course or any other course, in a short while. It is often the same with some Christians who think that by carrying a Bible they can become Sadhus or preachers. This is quite a wrong idea! Others think that they must go through some special training before they can serve him No matter how clever we are we need certainly to be trained before we can be used but the training must be God's own training. Read the lives of Moses, David and Paul and see how they had to be trained and disciplined by God before they could become His servants.

Whenever God intends to call a man for real service, He first demands that whatever job we are doing first, should be done faithfully. Soon after my conversion, I had to do odd various jobs. Sometimes I had to work as a salesman, sometimes as a coolie in a firm, sometimes digging in the fields, or feeding pigs, or doing other heavy jobs on the farm. At one time I even worked as a cook. I thank God now for all the training and discipline I went through then. God was proving me whether I would give my employer a chance to bring a charge against me. God trains His servants in this way, and if you are being unfaithful in your offices or homes, you must ask Him to forgive you, for He cannot call you to greater service till you have been faithful in that which is least. God trained Elisha in this way and then called him. Before He can call you for His service, He will train you in the same way.

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We have already seen how God prepared Elisha for the ministry to which He would one day call him. Elisha was a vessel prepared and ready against the call of God. By this means God showed Elijah that He was calling Elisha to carry on the same ministry that had been begun through Elijah. God sent Elijah to the field, but at that time He did not tell Elijah everything. He told him only that He wanted Elisha. Now Elijah, as God's prophet, was well known to everybody. Even judging by his dress and manners everybody would know that he was a prophet, so it would not take long for Elisha to recognize him.

As Elijah passed Elisha, he threw his mantle upon him. This may have been a custom at that time to indicate one chosen for service. That mantle of Elijah thrown

on Elisha indicated that God wanted him and had some work for him to do. Without that sign Elisha would not have known it, but now he knew that the Lord had immediate need of him. He knew that the casting of the mantle upon him meant that he was to leave that job and go after Eliah, and not to delay. The call came to him in such a clear , unmistakable way that he wanted immediately to go home and say 'goodbye' and then go after Elijah. Have you had that call in your life? It may come in any of many ways. God is not limited in the manner of His call to you but can you say truthfully and faithfully to your fellow-workers that God has indeed called you? Has God taken away the desire for the work which you have been doing, and put into your heart a strong desire for His service even though you cannot see any clear plan as to what He wants you to do for Him? If not you must pray: "O, God! Take away from my heart the desire for my job and give me a strong desire to follow Thee wherever Thou shalt lead me."

In my younger days, I was extremely fond of engineering, and it was my life-long ambition to be an engineer. I even dreamed about being an engineer and I spent many years in study in order to become proficient in engineering. At that time I would and visit all kinds of workshops where they were making machinery. Gas engines, steam engines, big engines, and small engines attracted and fascinated me and whenever I saw or heard of a new machine I wanted to see how it worked, and how it would go.

I remember how suddenly I lost all interest in machines and machinery, no matter how new and wonderful they were. God filled me with a great longing to go and tell everybody what I knew about Him. At first it was very embarrassing for me, because I had a stutter, and stammered in my speech. I had a strong desire to tell all my neighbours about God, but the words would not come out of my mouth. However carefully I tried to speak, I would begin to stutter, and they my friends would say: "pardon me! What did you say?" I never could open my mouth and at once speak properly. I was ashamed of myself, and it was a very humiliating condition; yet I never got discouraged. Even though it took half an hour to begin to speak I never left the man until my tongue came straight. My desire was so strong that I wanted to tell everybody about the Lord Jesus Christ, so whether in a shop or anywhere else I would begin to talk about the Lord.

In England barbers are very talkative, and one day when I went to have my hair cut, the barber said to me, "What a miserable day!" because it was cloudy and raining. It is common among barbers to open conversation in this way. I answered him: "Yes, Sir, but I don't mind the rain" So he said, "I suppose you come from India where the sun shines everyday." "I am not talking about India's Sunshine," I replied, "but a sunshine that has come into my heart." He stopped cutting my hair and listened to my story. What a joy it was to tell that barber and everyone in the shop about the Lord. You see, the call of God fills you with a strong urge to tell others what the Lord means to you, and that is, indeed, why God is calling you. If you call yourself a servant of God you must prove that you have a strong call from God, to serve Him, and that He has filled you with a great urge to tell others about Him.

When God called this man Elisha, he had to give up his job and follow Elijah for sometime, and in doing so he had to do some very ordinary jobs. He had to minister to the needs of Elijah and was called "The one that poured water on the hands of Elijah." Usually when somebody wants to distinguish a man he will describe him as "a man who has traveled in many countries" or as "a man of many degrees." But Elisha was known to the people firstly, that he was a man "that poured water on the hands of Elisha," and secondly, that the Word of the Lord with him. 2 Kings 3:11, 2 Kings 19:11 last part.

Now what is the special qualification of being one who poured water on the hands of Elijah? Simply this, that though he was wealthy man in his country, owning his own oxen and land, yet for ten years Elisha served with Elijah doing the ordinary jobs of a servant, and that is how God calls and prepares His servants. Do not be discouraged when you are proved and tested in many ways. The first thing you need to do is to convince others that God has called you for His service. It is not enough to give a few verses to your friends, but to prove it by a change which took place in your life, when the Lord took away the desire for the work you were doing and gave the desire for His work. You will find that idle and lazy people have never been proved to God's servants, for God first proves His servants in very small things, and only then He give them real and greater responsibility, and their true ministry can begin. When God calls you for His service, remember that you will first be proven, so you must be faithful to God, even in that which seems to least, and thus be able to prove that God is calling you to be His servant, His mouth-piece, and His vessel.

The whole training of Elisha is thus summed up in 2 Kings 2; for 10 years God was proving, testing, and training Elisha by keeping him under discipline of Elijah and you will find out that in almost every case that God takes up to somebody to be trained. In some cases it is rather painful. Those who have rebelled against that period of training have been sorely tempted, and some have fallen. But God in His mercy wants to save you from falling.

At last God put Elisha to a definite test. 2 Kings 2:1. There we read of the last journey which Elisha and Elijah took together. It is only at the end of that journey that the real ministry of Elisha began, but first he had to pass all those definite and final testings, so that he could be declared as God's worthy and true servant. The previous ten years of training were surely not a waste of time. God could have prepared Elisha for a short time, and then have taken him immediately into His service, for the need was very great. But God is never in a hurry! A divine law has to be fulfilled before any one can enter the service of God, and so it was with Elisha. The journey began at the place called Gilgal, and Elijah asked Elisha to stay at Gilgal while God sent him to Bethel. That is how God tested Elisha. He would not use any compulsion or force on him. But Elisha replied that he would go along with Elijah, he refused to leave him. If Elisha had wanted he could have stayed at Gilgal, and have sent Elijah away. But he said: "I am not going to stay any more at Gilgal. I am determined to go with you further." If we refer back to the book of Joshua, we shall find the meaning of Gilgal. In Joshua 5:9, we read, "and the Lord said unto Joshua: 'this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Therefore the name of the place was called Gilgal.'" Though the children of Israel had left Egypt many years before, yet they were still under the reproach of Egypt. But in Gilgal, this reproach was rolled away.

Now we are concerned with those who are in the Lord's service. Even though you may be born again and God may have forgiven, you of all your sins, and made you His child, you still carry upon yourself the reproach of Egypt. Because of what you were and did in the old worldly days the reproach is still upon you, and even though God has forgiven you for what you have done in the past, yet you find your neighbours will not appreciate that there is a change in your life. You find people remembering you of what you did many years ago. For this reason some who were

called for God's service in Northern India, run away to Southern India. They go to some place where nobody knows anything about them, and where they can escape the reproach. "Now nobody will know me in those parts" they think, and decide that this is an easy way of escape. But you can run to Timaturu, the forsaken town, and the reproach of Egypt will go with you even there. Do not think that by going to far places, you can deceive people and make them believe something about you that is not true. This is the reason why some preachers find it hard to stay in the same place too long. They will stay for one or two months and then say that the Lord has spoken to them to go on to another place. Yes, you can even show many verses from the Word of God but if the real reason is that the reproach of Egypt is troubling you, you will fail as so many other preachers have failed because they never waited patiently till the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Wherever God has called you, there stay, till you are proven and tested.

I remember in Karachi when I began to serve the God people began to say all kinds of things about me. Some wrote very filthy articles saying so many evil and wicked things about me that I thought it would be better to run away from Karachi, to some other place. But God kept me there for 5 years till the very same persons who had so maligned me had to confess that they were used by the enemy to say all those evil things about me. One by one they all came and apologized. Servant of God, do not run away from the job God has given you. If God has called you to be His servant remain where God has put you, in spite of the hardships and troubles you may be passing through. Do not think that you are superior spiritually, and that nobody understands you. You must convince people that God has spoken to you. You must stand firm, and get victory, first of all in your own life and then over the evil reports of men. Very often there is some foundation for what men say about us. You may be born again but, you still have the old nature, and because of that old nature you may be doing things that are shameful and dishonouring to God's value. Often we are inexperienced we are deceived by the old nature and that is why the reproach of Egypt is not rolled away. When you lose your temper, and in small things show greed, whether for money, or for good food, this is something shameful in a servant of God. Some people, when they see good food, their tongues and mouths water, or, if they do not get nice food, they give hints as to what they want. Then, if all their schemes fail, they are sure to fall sick. Is God's name honoured by such carnality? Is it any wonder that you carry upon you still the reproach of Egypt and that you are

still at Gilgal. It is because you have never learned to get away from this crafty nature. If we stand before men as God's servants we must be free from all reproach, whether in money matters, or dress, or food, in our going about or in our manners.

Also as God's servants, people will watch everything you do, and mark whether you have the least sign of worldliness in your behaviour, or talk or dress. Does the very method of your going about prove to people that you are God's servant? The whole world is watching where we sit, and how we walk. In this way God trained Elisha step by step till all men knew that God had indeed called him. In 10 years of training he was being proven that he had no love for money, or clothes, or home, or name or fame. That is how God will prove us also, till everything which is subtle and hidden and crafty in our natures is revealed to us, and confessed, and removed from us. The first question we want you to put to yourself is: is there any reproach of Egypt upon me? You are God's servant and you have been called to serve Him and because of this you are going to be measured by different standards than other people. You cannot be measured by the same standard as the ordinary man of the world, because you are standing in the name of God, and speaking in His name.

I remember sometime ago the Government of Sind sent a messenger to a brother in Sind where I was staying. That messenger was riding on a fine horse and he came into the compound at the same time as I did. He did not dismount but called for somebody to receive the message, so I asked why should he not come down from the horse, and deliver it himself to which he replied that he was a messenger of the Government. In the same way, as God's servants, we must stand or act with the dignity that becomes a servant of God. Alas, how many of God do servants fail to represent Him in a right way? The old nature will come up again and again in money matters and sex matters. God puts His servants through many a hard and difficult test, and for this reason many have to stay at Gilgal for many many years. Worldliness in some form or other comes up again and again and there are many so-called preachers who have many marks of the world, or of the old nature in their speech and in their life. Spiritually your eye should be eye and your nay should be nay. In everything we have to shine as lights for God in this world. We are a spiritual people and not a worldly people, and only by living and moving on that spiritual plane can we convince people that we are God's servants. Let us

examine ourselves again and again and ask ourselves: Am I still bearing the reproach of Egypt? Oh! God, deliver me from that weakness of the old nature in my life. The devil is so subtle that he brings those temptations in different ways to all of us, and it is for each one of us to examine our conversation and manners in every detail, that the name of our holy God may not be blasphemed, because of our failure.

There are different races in the world, Madiga and Mala, and both can be great men in the world, but when it comes to the question of marriage, one race thinks itself better than another. Outwardly they seem extremely well-educated people, but when they make enquires about the marriage of their children, they will try to find out whether they are Madigas or Malas and will protest that they have different customs, and different habits so cannot possibly live together. With us also as God's servants really it is the Madiga nature that is coming out, and causing all these troubles among the people of God and bringing reproach on the name of Christ. The reproach of Egypt has not been rolled away.

Even in little matters of personal hygiene and cleanliness we can bear ourselves worthily as God's servants. Some people will live dirtily even though they are given the best and most beautiful room in the whole of India. When they go to bath-room they will make the place filthy, and allow dirty clothes to be hanging here and there. It would not take long to have the bath-room washed with one bucket of water, or to wash those dirty clothes, but because of their old nature they neglect even so simple a duty. When they go outside, they look very smart and nice. But the old nature is still there. Do not think that this is a small thing. You betray your true character because of all these small weaknesses whether in the bath-room or whether in your work. As a child of God and as His servant you must be clean in your person, in your habits, in your thoughts and words, and life. When God saved you, not only your soul, but also your nature should have become clean and white in every part. As God's servant you must be free from every reproach of Egypt. It is in small things that you are going to be trained first, and God will bring you to Gilgal till the reproach of the world, is rolled away from you, both within and without, and you stand boldly before the people proven that your are God's servant, I spite of every handicap.