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A LIFE OF SERVICE

Nicolo Paganini was by anyone's definition a truly gifted and wonderful virtuoso of the violin. Upon his death in 1849, it was discovered that he had willed his marvelous violin to the city of his birth, Genoa. However it was stipulated in his will that the violin was never to be played again by anyone. It was an unfortunate condition, for the instrument was crafted out of wood that has a peculiarity to it, that being as long as it is handled it shows little wear. Once it is no longer used on a regular basis, it begins to dry and as such loses its tonal quality.

The violin that once produced an exquisite, mellow tone has become a dried out relic in a beautiful case. It has precious little value except as a relic of what once was. Truly a monumental loss. Yet, there is a lesson that can be garnered as one gazes at the violin; a life withdrawn from service to others, dries up and ceases to have real meaning. Perhaps that is why the Scriptures put a premium on the need for the individual disciple of Christ to have the mind set of servitude as did Christ (see John 13:5-17; John 12:26; Philipians 2:5-7)

As James opens up his epistle to the brethren that has been scattered abroad he identifies himself simply as "a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." What is so striking is that even though he is more than likely the brother of Jesus, he does not delve into who is, rather the thrust is on what his relationship is to the Father and Jesus Christ. By using that designation James was extolling the fact that he was living a life of service to the Master. A manner of life entered into freely and willingly. He was aware of the fact that he had indeed been bought with a price and that God saw in him worth and value (see 1Peter 1:17-23; 1Corinthians 7:23) A life of service.

For those who been purchased by the precious blood of Christ, through obedience to the gospel, a life of service is fundamental. Such service is not viewed as being laborious, rather one holding an attitude of extreme delight. But such an attitude has characterized one following God under the old law as well as those under the new covenant in Christ.



Notice the words found in the 100th psalm. "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing." (v2) In order to remain of useful service to God it is imperative that one not denigrate into being a mere relic of what once was, but to remain active and vibrant. It is a sad commentary, but far and away too many are Paganini's violin, no longer active and productive; little by little drying and wasting away.

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, preserving in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality." (Romans 12:10-13) Pay close attention to the placement of the words, "serving the Lord" in that reading. Service looks out to others. There is the desire to be of service to the Master and others. That desire is satisfied when the work that has been set apart by Christ is enjoined by His followers.

The type of service that is seen in the Scriptures cannot be brought about by being withdrawn. There must be the inter acting of one another, "For the equipping of the saints by the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12) Note what Peter penned about service, "As each has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1Peter 4:10) (wbe)

THE BULWARK