

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Excellence In Service

I. There's the Lord and His things and then there's everything else

- A. We need to differentiate between the Lord's stuff and other stuff-When we are handling the Lord's stuff we need to be aware of it and treat His things like they are holy and not like they are common
1. **1Co11:20-22**-*When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating everyone takes before his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God*
 2. Is The Lord's supper and your supper the same?-You eat yours to get full, you eat His to remember Him
 3. They failed to differentiate the difference between theirs and God's-They're treating God's stuff like their stuff; They were coming to God's house and eating His supper treating it like their house and their supper
 4. They're treating the Lord's stuff as common-They should be treating it as Holy (sacred); God's things are Holy and God doesn't want us to be stiff or rigid and yet at the same time these things need to be approached like their sacred, like they're holy and with respect
- B. Everything is not the Lord's-There's the things that belong to the Lord and then there's everything else-**1Co7:32**-*He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife*
1. His business and not your business-**Lk2:49**-*I must be about my Father's business; His house and your house*-**Ha1:9**-*Mine house that is waste and you run to every man unto his own house*
 2. If everything is the Lord's you treat everything the same-Everything is not supposed to be treated the same
- C. When it's His stuff we're handling and His business we're involved in we give it our best-**1Cor15:58**

II. The quality of your service to God should be excellent

- **Gn4:3**-*Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering (gift, sacrifice) unto the LORD ⁴And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings (first produced) of his flock and of the fat (choice, finest, best) thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ⁵But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect (regard, value). And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell. ⁶And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door*
- A. Offerings can vary in quality-What you do unto the Lord, what you do for Him, what you bring to him can vary in quality-**Hb11:4**-*Abel offered unto God a more excellent (greater/superior in quality) sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of His gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks*
- B. God doesn't value all offerings-He did not value Cain's offering; **ER-Did not accept-NET**-*Was not pleased*
1. Is God pleased with and does He just accept all service/offerings?-Two guys bring offerings to the Lord and God looks at both offerings and says this is a quality offering that I value, but this one is low quality
 2. God judges the quality of our offerings and our service-Shouldn't He just be grateful we did something?
- C. The quality of their offerings were motivated by their level of their honor-Abel's offering was high quality because his honor was high; Cain's offering was low quality because his honor was low
1. Why did they bring what they brought?-Abel brought his first and best because God and His offering meant something to him; Cain brought something low because God/His offering didn't mean to him what it should
 - a. What Cain did in this offering was evil-**1Jn3:12**-*His own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*
 2. Excellence is the outflow of your honor-When God's things mean something to you, you give them your best; Cain's offering was not excellent because His honor was absent

- D. The heart content in your offering/service is what determines the quality of it-To God the quality is good when the quantity of heart in it is high (and that is seen in you being excellent and giving it your best)
1. God's interested in your heart-1Sm16:7-Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart; Jr17:10-I the Lord search the heart; Dt8:2-God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and to prove you, to know what was in your heart; 2Ch16:9-The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him
 2. Where what you value is there will your heart be and that's where your excellence will be-Mt6:21-When something is important to you, your heart is in it and you give it your best
 3. No excellence-no heart-no value to God-Cain's heart wasn't in this offering, that's why God didn't value it
- E. The quality of your offering/service to the Lord is a window into your heart-We can see into your heart by examining the quality of your offering/service; Cain and Abel's offering are saying something about their hearts
1. 1Ch29-The house of the Lord must be exceeding magnificent-What does this reveal about his heart? Jn12-A year's salary's worth of ointment poured on his feet-What does this reveal about his heart?
 2. You want to know what's in your heart-One of the main ways to know what's in your heart is look at the quality of your service/offering; Your heart is not always right and adjustments need to be made
 3. Many don't want to see what's truly in their heart, they'd rather pretend-This is why Cain got so angry; A combination of His offering and Abel's offering revealed his heart and he couldn't pretend anymore

III. Is shoddy and second-rate service okay with the Lord?

- *Mal1:6-A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? ⁷ Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. ⁸ And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.⁹ And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.¹⁰ Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.¹¹ For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.¹² But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.¹³ Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.*
- A. Their lack of honor is exposed by their lack of excellence-They asked God in what way have they despised (dishonor) His name and He said it was through their low quality offerings, non-excellent offerings
1. The quality of what you do for the Lord is telling-In terms of your honor and in terms of your heart
- B. Does in accept any offering/service?-Just because you showed up and did something doesn't mean God accepted it-They showed up and did something, but God didn't accept it
1. Is God thankful for anything you slop up on his table? Should He be?
- C. Does God care about the quality of your offering/service?-People like to pretend that God doesn't care about the quality of your service and that He will accept anything, but is that true?
1. God's not harsh-He's not looking to be hard on you or your offering, but you're not going to fool him and if you're going through the motions giving some second-rate service/offering He knows it
 2. What do second rate offerings reveal?-If you're giving a second-rate effort to the things of God it's because you don't value them like you should and if you're at that place you need to repent and make changes
 3. An excuse to be sloppy-People use God's love and grace as an excuse to be sloppy

- D. In regards to your offering/service God wants your best-He wants His things to mean something to you and He wants you to give them your best
1. God doesn't just want something He wants your best-They're offered something, but it was shoddy
 2. The governor got their best, God got the rest-Does God get the best of you or the rest of you?-Does he get the first of you or what's left of you?
- E. God doesn't like pretending and playing-Pretending like it's important to you while you give a second-rate effort
1. 10-Something or nothing?-Rather than a second-rate offering God would rather you bring nothing at all
 2. Stop pretending-Be honest before the Lord and just acknowledge it's not as important to me as it should be and you can see that in the quality of my service and then repent – BUT NEVER PRETEND
- F. The quality of the offering reveals the quantity of heart-This is why God is so interested in quality; When you're service/offering means something to you, it means something to the Lord

IV. Approach the things of God with a spirit of excellence-That is doing your best to make your service great

- A. When it comes to the things of God we are to be excellent-1Co15:58-Therefore my beloved brethren be steadfast, immovable, always abounding (superabound in quality, excel, make excellent) in the work (business) of the Lord for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain (empty, no purpose) in the Lord
1. Excellence is a command, it's the standard, it's the expectation-It is not a suggestion neither is it optional
 2. Superabound in quality-When it comes to the thing of God we are to superabound in quality
- B. Excellence is you doing your best to make the quality of what you do great-1Co15:58-AM-Be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord [always doing your best and doing more than is needed], being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile nor wasted [it is never without purpose]; Ec9:10-VO-Whatever you find to do, do it well; ER-Every time you find work to do, do the best you can
- C. Excellence is the result of doing something with all your heart-A half-hearted effort will never yield excellence
1. We are not to approach the Lord's things half-heartedly-1Sm12:24-Serve him in truth with all your heart (appetite, emotion, passion, resolution, determination); **Js22:5**-Serve him with all your heart and soul
 2. We are to give ourselves fully to the Lord's things-1Co15:58-ER-Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord; **MS**-Throw yourselves into the work of the Master; **NABRE**-Fully devoted to the work of the Lord
- D. Excellence is not just about the outside product, it a heart issue-Excellence says something about your heart
- E. Excellence expresses honor and demonstrates faithfulness-It reveals that what you're doing means something to you and it demonstrates you can be trusted with more; It is your appeal to God for more

V. 5 foundational principles to being a person of excellence

- A. You are doing what you do as unto the Lord and He is worthy of your best-Co13:23-KJ-Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ; **MS**-Don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real master, for God...Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible
1. Volunteer-People think that because they're a volunteer and not getting paid it gives them a license to do shoddy work and the church should just be thankful; You lack of understanding of who you're doing it unto
 2. Let it be real to you, who you're doing it unto-To many it's not real to them who they are doing it unto
- B. Acknowledge the reality that God cares about the quality-Don't pretend like He doesn't care
- C. Understand the quality of your service is a reflection of your heart-It exposes your heart

- D. Magnify your office-Whatever the Lord gives you to do, see it big, treat it big-**Rm11:13**-*For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch, as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office*
- E. Make it shine-When excellence is finished the work shines-Go the extra mile, don't just get the job done but get it done with class and professionalism, autograph your performance, don't try to impress just be impressive
 - 1. Excellence is hard work-The quality of your work is determined by the quantity of your effort
 - 2. Excellence demands sacrifice-To do your best it's going to cost you more
 - 3. If God gave it to you to do, just how well you should endeavor to do it?

VI. Do natural things, outside things matter? Or does God only care about spiritual things, inside things?

- A. Many believe that outside things don't matter-My appearance, my timeliness, what I do outside in regards to my effort, my performance, the quality of what I do doesn't matter and God doesn't care about those things
 - 1. **Mt23:25**-*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess 26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also*
 - 2. Hypocrite means pretender-He's correcting them about trying to project something outwardly that they don't have inwardly; They are trying to get the outside right so as to appear right before men when inwardly they are not right
 - 3. The correction here is about the put on-Trying to get people to believe you are something inwardly that you are not by putting something on outwardly; Should we pretend and put on to try to get people to believe that we love God and honor God more than we actually do?
- B. People emphasize the inside and deemphasize the outside-People overemphasize the inside and deemphasize and downplay the outside and act like it doesn't matter and God doesn't care about it
 - 1. Jesus didn't say and never said the outside doesn't matter-He's actually saying the outside should be clean
 - 2. It is true trying to do something outside to project something outside that you don't have inside is not right, but people have failed to acknowledge that if the inside is right then it will reflect on the outside
- C. You can't separate the outside from the inside-You can't disconnect what you do outwardly (with natural things) from what's going on in your heart-**Pr27:19-KJ**-*As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man; NIV*-*As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart*
 - 1. God knows my heart-People often use this phrase in an attempt to dismiss their outward actions as any reflection of what's going on in the heart
 - 2. An excuse to be sloppy-Many people use God doesn't care as excuse to be sloppy outside, not realizing that the outside is a reflection of what's inside
- D. Do natural things matter to God? Should natural things, outside things matter to us?
 - 1. I thought God didn't care about stuff like this-**Exodus 19:9**-*The LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. ¹⁰ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, ¹¹ And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*
 - a. It's not about the clothes being clean it's about making a big deal about God which reveals our heart; It's not that God cares about clothes alone, but He's interested in the heart and the outside reflects it
 - b. God is coming to visit them; Should that be a big deal to them? Would they wash their clothes for something? Is any something a bigger deal than the Lord?

2. Outer things reveal inner things-People like to pretend that God doesn't care about natural things, outer things and that those things don't matter, but that's not true is because outer things reveal inner things; How you handle natural things, outside things reveals spiritual things, inner things about you
 - a. If the church is dirty, we are unorganized, and things aren't prepared, and you're late to the things and don't show up for services and you come in what you wear to work in the yard and you get antsy after sitting for an hour – Would that say anything about us as a church inwardly?
 - b. Mal1-It's a natural table, natural bread, natural animals and yet how they treated something natural revealed something about their heart
 - c. Luke 16:11-How you handle natural money says something about you spiritually?
 3. Outside things should matter to us-The heart should matter to us and outside things, natural things are telling in terms of our heart
- E. If honor is inside, excellence will be outside-If God and His things are important to you, then you're going to do your best to make your service great
1. Excellence is the outflow of the honor that's stirring in our hearts-Excellence is not our attempt to put on to others that God's things are important to us when they are not, it's the outflow of honor