

Editorial

This issue focuses on Christians' obligation to serve God among His people. Serving God is so serious a matter that Joshua once told the Israelites: "Ye cannot serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:19), though they had said, "therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God" (v. 18b). Why such a crushing statement to a people who expressed their zeal to serve the LORD?

Serving God is not what we do whenever and however we like. It demands absolute surrender to God's will. Serving God begins with an acknowledgment that we are incapable of serving Him on our own. It is what the theologians call the doctrine of "moral inability" or "total depravity". Our impure hearts and unclean hands are an abomination to the most Holy God. Offering something to God or doing something in His name would not be regarded as a service, if those who render them do not repent and put away their sins and turn to God in faith.

That was why Joshua warned the people earlier: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD" (v. 14). Service demands absolute consecration to God. If God be served at all, He alone must be served. Nothing and no one else should be allowed to take first place in our hearts. No other claimant can be our God, as Jesus had admonished – "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Today, many in the church come to serve God, but their hearts hanker after the "gods" of our time – wealth, luxury, carnal pleasure, head-knowledge, fame, etc. How can God ever be pleased with their service? Jesus warned, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

If God be served at all, He must be served in sincerity and truth. God will thoroughly examine every form of service offered to Him, to see if it be sincere and "clean every whit", or it will not be acceptable to Him. Every service rendered to God must be born of obedience to His Word. It must be rendered with humility and resolve of heart (cf. Acts 20:19), with faith and prayer (Hebrews 11:6), with all our strength and might (Romans 12:11), and with gladness and thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2; 100:2).