

„THIS ONE THING I DO”

Human experience, as well as the divine word, attest the importance of concentrating energy upon some one thing if we would achieve the best results.

It was Jesus who said, „No man can serve two masters.”—“Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” It was James who said, „A *double* minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

To-day the keenest business men of the world are endorsing this teaching of Scripture by applying the principle in their business. In the various trades as now conducted, one man does a part of the work. In the making of shoes, watches, pianos; in fact in everything it is found expedient to subdivide the work, so that each man may do a certain part only and thus become more proficient. This *one thing* he does and thus becomes proficient in it.

The same principle is becoming recognized in the higher walks of life. A successful business man not unfrequently fails utterly when he attempts to branch out into politics. Where two prizes are aimed at, neither will be fully achieved. The man who seeks the top-most round of both wealth and politics will fail of one and most likely of both.—No man can serve *two* masters. Recognizing this, we find the successful men pursuing some *one* object or aim in life.

If this be true as regards earthly things, how much emphasis it places upon the words of Jesus and the Apostles as relating to spiritual things. And not only their words but their lives attest the principle. The words of Paul—“This *one thing* I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13,14)—has only an empty sound until we thoughtfully consider *what things* he had left behind, and what was *now* the aim or prize for which he was running. And since we are exhorted to follow his example in the race, it may be well for each to examine himself to see how like, or unlike, his course is to that of Paul (Phil. 3:17).

Looking back we find that Paul had superior advantages and prospects as a man. He had „much learning,” having been educated under one of the best teachers of that day, „Gamaliel.” Education was more rare than now and more costly. Consequently the opportunities and influence of educated men were proportionately greater.

Paul was a Doctor of Divinity, or, as they were then called, „Doctor of the Law”—a member of the Sanhedrin. Being thus a „Master in Israel,” all may see that he occupied a place of great influence and dignity among his fellow countrymen. Add to these honors the fact that by birth, he inherited „Roman citizenship,” and we find a man with brighter prospects than one in ten thousand of his countrymen for gaining a place of pre-eminent distinction either in the State government or in the nominal Jewish Church.

Whether or not Paul also inherited wealth we are not informed, but it is reasonable to suppose so. At all events his „Roman citizenship” was worth „a great sum” (Acts 22:28).

But, summing up all these possessions, the ambitions which they stimulated and the prizes which they pointed out, Paul turned his back on them all when his eye caught sight of the heavenly prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. He counted them all but as *dross* when compared to the true jewel. It is when reviewing this course of action that he uses the words of our text.

Whatever things were gain to me, these I have, on account of the Anointed One, esteemed as a loss. But then, indeed, I esteem all things to be a loss on account of the *excellency* of the knowledge of the Anointed Jesus my Lord; on whose account I suffered the loss of all things and consider them to be *vile refuse*, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in him: ... to know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship [sharing] of his sufferings, being conformed to *his death*.

Not that I have already received it, or have been already perfected, but I pursue, if, indeed, I may lay hold on that *for which I was laid hold on* by Christ. Brethren, I do not reckon myself to have attained it, but *one thing I do*—even forgetting the things BEHIND and stretching forth towards the things BEFORE, I press along the line towards the PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING of God by Christ Jesus.

„As many, therefore, as are perfect should be of this mind; and if in any [other:: thing you think differently, God will also reveal this to you” (Phil. 3:7-15—*Diaglott*)

Though Paul had sacrificed so much, there is no evidence that he ever regretted it, or desired to have those things back. On the contrary, his ambition seems to have been such that he could have wished that his possessions and hopes had been yet larger in order that his *sacrifice* might thus have been the greater. In his case there was no „looking back” like Lot’s wife, but a *forgetting* of those things which he had sacrificed. He thus avoided a temptation common to many to-day, who, though they have left very little, comparatively, continually look back at it and recount to themselves how much they have suffered and lost, thus hindering a completion of the sacrifice

and race begun. Let us take a lesson from this, and forget, too, the things behind—forget our old hopes and earthly aims and ambitions, and fill our minds only with those aims and hopes which are before—laid up, in reservation for us. But what was the *one* thing which Paul did? We are apt to forget that Paul and the other Apostles were men much like ourselves. And though the common affairs of life are scarcely mentioned, but only the more public ministrations, nevertheless all of these entered into their life experiences much as with us. Remembering this will enable us the better to appreciate their examples. Hence we answer that the *one* thing which Paul was doing was not preaching,

::R0479 : page 3::

nor writing, nor singing hymns, nor traveling, but the one thing he did was, as Jesus expressed it—doing the will of God. It was in harmony with this will of God that Paul traveled, preached, made tents, was persecuted, imprisoned, etc.; and it was necessary, as Paul knew, to lay aside and forget all the aims and masters in order to render acceptable service to him who declared, „No man can serve two masters.”

Looked at thus, beloved, if we would be acceptable to our Master and win the prize of our high-calling, we must determine also—“This *one* thing I do.” Did you once have an ambition for wealth and luxury? You must forget that, as one of the things that were, but are not. Were you ambitious for fame, worldly honor, or office? Let these all fade away in the light of the greater honor and glories now before you in prospect, for which you are now running and striving—“A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” This is the one thing to be sought now, and *all our doings* must be with reference to it if we would win it. To divide our attention would be to lose it.

But, does some brother or sister say, Alas! then I can never win this great prize? I cannot give all my attention to doing this one thing; I must spend time and strength daily, laboring for the meat that perisheth. Ah, brother, I am glad you mention it. I can encourage you on this point I hope. Let me remind you that Paul made tents for a living—“labored, working with his hands.” Now, I ask you, was he not as truly in the service of God while making tents as while preaching? Was he not as really doing the *one thing*? The fact that you have *less time*, and doubtless *less talent* to spend in declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ, does not change the matter. God knows your circumstances and *necessities*, and he declares it to be his will that you care for those whom his providence has placed under your care. Hence, in thus caring for them, you are doing his will who declares, That „if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

But, on the other hand, let us see that our attention to earthly things is limited by *necessity*. There is danger that our necessities be too liberally considered, thus tending to cultivate pride and

desire, and to hold us back and hinder our race. There is always danger lest the *needful* affairs of this life develop into matters of aim and object which would interfere and conflict with the one aim before us.

In a word, then, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God. If we find certain food to incapacitate us and interfere with—this *one thing* we do—then we should deny ourselves of it. Can we glorify our Father more by great plainness of dress, or great plainness of speech? Then that alone and not *our* convenience or will, but His will be done. This is doing the same one thing and seeking the same prize in the same way exactly as did Paul. This, too, is what Jesus meant when he said, „Seek ye *first* (chiefly) the kingdom of God.” All other seeking must be subordinate to this if we would win this prize.

It will be noticed in Paul’s argument, as above quoted (Phil. 3:15), that he concludes that as many as are standing complete in Christ, should have „this mind” to seek the *one thing*—the prize before and to forget those behind. And when he adds, „And if in any [other:: thing you think differently, God will also reveal this unto you,” it seems that he meant to have us understand, that wherever *this entire consecration* to the will of God exists, based on the ransom as expressed in verse 9, *such* consecrated ones are in the right way; and though they might, perhaps, hold minor errors, it was only a question of time when they would come to appreciate the truth. Beloved, let us who claim to stand complete and perfect in Christ Jesus, be thus minded, and thus, in all we do, press along the line, keeping in view only the one aim and prize of our high calling.

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