

GOD

Serving God

Throughout history, people have served someone or something: other people, themselves, or the false gods of religion. The one true God, however, has always desired that people would, by their freedom of will, serve Him.

To serve God is to love Him and to obey His commandments. In order for someone to want to make the free-will decision to serve God, there has to be some benefit in store. God has made so much available to those who willingly serve Him; we just need to trust in Him as we serve and claim those benefits. Serving God and reaping the benefits and blessings that only He can make available is an on-going process.

In Matthew Chapter 4, verse 10 we see Jesus Christ's great response to a temptation to worship something other than the true God.

Matthew

4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Jesus Christ quoted what is written in Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20 (written twice, so it is established), which proclaims that the one true God is the only one to serve. The word "serve" in Matthew 4:10 is translated from the Greek word *latreuō*, more specifically meaning to serve God by rendering obedience and adoration to Him. We serve God by lovingly obeying His commandments.

One other Greek word used in the context of serving is *douleuō*, a verb form of *doulos*. We are familiar with the word *doulos* as a bond-slave, one who makes a sold-out commitment to serve. One place that we see the word *douleuō* in the context of serving God is in Matthew Chapter 6, verse 24:

Matthew

6:24 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.

Everybody has a choice to make: they can either serve, make a sold-out commitment to, God; or they can serve "mammon". The word "mammon" literally means "wealth" or "profit" but is used here to represent anything that one can serve with the covetous intent for personal gain. Jesus Christ then continued his teaching by making the point that if you choose to serve God, He will take care of your needs. It says in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The verses we just considered in the Gospel of Matthew regarding serving God were directed to Israelites before the Day of Pentecost that marks the beginning of the Administration of Grace in which we live today. As we will see, serving God today is different from serving

God in those Old Testament times. We will want to answer the question: What does it mean for us to serve God in this day and time?

Before the Day of Pentecost, the believers were servants of God. The Hebrew word most often translated “servant”, *ebed*, literally means “a person at the disposal of another” or “a worker who belongs to a master”. All of the great Old Testament believers, including Abraham, Moses, and Joshua, were God’s servants. Even Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son, was also a servant of God sent to fulfill the Old Testament Law and redeem mankind.

As God’s servants, the Old Testament believers enjoyed great benefits and blessings as they trusted in God to serve Him. Let’s look at a few examples from the Book of Psalms:

Psalms

35:27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

God wanted His servants to prosper.

31:14 But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou *art* my God.

31:15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

31:16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake.

31:19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear (respect) thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

31:23 O love the Lord, all ye his saints: *for* the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

31:24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

In these verses we see several benefits to God’s servants as they trusted in Him: deliverance from enemies and persecution, the benefits of God’s great goodness, and strength.

It’s interesting in these verses that we see both of the Hebrew words commonly translated “trust”. In verse 14, the word “trusted” is from the Hebrew word *batach*, meaning to lean on, to be confident in. In verse 19, the word for “trust” is *chasah*, to trust by taking refuge in. These servants of God could expect God’s blessings as they trusted in God by leaning on Him, having confidence in Him, and taking refuge in Him.

Psalms

100:2 Serve the Lord (Jehovah) with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

100:5 For the Lord *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

Psalms

2:11 Serve the Lord with fear (respect), and rejoice with trembling.

2:12b Blessed *are* all they that put their trust (*chasah*) in him.

- 34:22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust (*batach*) in him shall be desolate.
- 86:2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth (*batach*) in thee.
- 86:4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 86:5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
- 86:6 Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.
- 86:7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

We can see, then, that even though believers in Old Testament times were servants to God, as they trusted in Him, He took care of them and their lives were blessed.

When the Administration of Grace began on the Day of Pentecost, it became available for us to become born again of God's spirit. Today, we are not God's servants like the Old Testament believers were: we are God's sons and daughters. We see this great truth in Galatians, Chapter 4:

Galatians

- 4:4 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
- 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
- 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son (the spirit; *the words "of his Son" are not in the text*) into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
- 4:7 Wherefore thou are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, *then* an heir of God through Christ.

Remember all those benefits that God's servants in Old Testament times could enjoy as they trusted in Him? How much more will He do for us, His children, as we trust in Him?

If we as children of God are not servants of God like the Old Testament believers were, we need to consider and understand verses that refer to believers in this Grace Administration as servants of God.

For example, the Apostle Paul served God. In Acts Chapter 27, verse 23 Paul mentions "God, whose I am, and whom I serve." In Romans 1:9, Paul wrote: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." Look at II Timothy Chapter 1, verse 3:

II Timothy

- 1:3 I thank God, *whom* I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.

In these examples, "serve" is from that Greek word *latreuō*, to serve God by rendering obedience and adoration to Him. We also see the word *latreuō* in Hebrews Chapter 9:

Hebrews

9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The works of Jesus Christ made it available for us, who were once under the Law with its dead works, to serve the living God.

We also see that believers in this Administration of Grace can serve God in the capacity of a *doulos*, a committed, sold-out bond-slave. In the salutation of his epistle to Titus, Paul refers to himself as “a servant (*doulos*) of God” (Titus 1:1). Similarly, James (James 1:1) and Jude (Jude 1) refer to themselves as *doulos* servants of God.

In Acts Chapter 4, the first recorded prayer in the Church of Grace, we see the believers in the household referring to themselves as God’s servants:

Acts

4:29 And now, Lord (*referring to God*), behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants (*doulos*), that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

4:30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

In some manuscripts, the latter part of verse 30 reads: “...by the name of thy holy servant Jesus.” Remember, even though Jesus Christ was God’s only begotten Son, he was also a *doulos* servant to God.

From these verses in Acts we can see that it is available for us, born-again believers in this Administration of Grace, to make the sold-out *doulos* commitment to serve God, and as we do we not only can speak His Word with boldness, trust, and confidence, but we can work signs and wonders in the name of Jesus Christ.

Look at I Thessalonians Chapter 1, verse 9, where we find a great usage of the word *douleuō*, the verb form of *doulos*:

I Thessalonians

1:9 For they themselves show of us which manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

We can make the sold-out commitment to serve the living and true God.

We just considered several verses where believers since the Day of Pentecost referred to themselves as serving God or being His servants, even though according to Galatians Chapter 4 we are no longer servants, but are sons and daughters of God. How can this be? How can we serve God in our day and time?

Let’s first consider Romans, Chapter 6, beginning in verse 16:

Romans

- 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?
- 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.
- 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.
- 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Here the word “servants” is *doulos*. Everyone has a choice. A person can become a sold-out, committed bond-slave to something other than God. Or, a person can confess Jesus as Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9), making that person a born-again son or daughter of God who is righteous (Romans 10:10). Only if one does the latter, getting born again, is it available for them to serve God.

We are righteous, made free from sin and the bondage of the Law:

Galatians

- 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Because we were made free from the yoke of bondage, we can stand fast boldly with a fearless mind, trusting in God. But what are we to do with this liberty? Look at verse 13:

- 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Now that we are free, we should serve one another, the believers standing in the household, with the love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation. And, in the context of service, Colossians Chapter 3, verses 23 and 24 tell us: “And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Remember that we saw in Matthew Chapter 6 that Jesus Christ, in the context of serving God, told his listeners to seek first the Kingdom of God, and their needs would be met? Now look at Romans, Chapter 14, where we’ll begin in verse 17:

Romans

- 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (through holy spirit *in the text*).
- 14:18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.
- 14:19 Let us therefore follow after (*pursue, earnestly endeavor to acquire*) the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

As we serve, we are to edify, or build up, one another, the believers in the household. We see more on how to serve in this way in Philippians Chapter 2:

Philippians

- 2:1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
2:2 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.
2:3 *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
2:7a But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant (*doulos*)...

Just like Jesus Christ when he served the people he was sent to, we, God's children in this Grace Administration today, serve God by serving others on a horizontal level. As we make the commitment to serve, we can trust in God that He will energize us, as it says in Philippians 2:13: "For it is God which worketh (*energizes*) in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure."

Romans Chapter 12 provides a great summary of how we, in this Grace Administration, are to serve God. Let's begin in verse 1:

Romans

- 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

The word "therefore" in this verse refers back to the great truths of Romans Chapter 8, the concluding chapter in the doctrinal portion of the Book of Romans (chapters 9 through 11 are a parenthesis so you could read directly from Chapter 8 to Chapter 12). In Chapter 8 we learn of our sonship and power as joint heirs with Christ; that we are more than conquerors in every situation; and that nothing can separate us from the love of God, our heavenly Father. Because of all this, we can trust in God as we do what it says in Chapter 12, verse 1: we can "present", or yield by our freedom of will, ourselves as a "living sacrifice". Notice that it says "living" – we can only serve God if we are alive.

We see in verse 1 that our yielding ourselves as a living sacrifice is "holy" (sanctified, set apart) and "acceptable unto God", and that it is our "reasonable service". The word "reasonable" can be understood as "logical" (it's from the word *logikos*): with all God has done for us, it is only logical that we do this service.

The word "service" in this verse is from the Greek word *latreuō*, which we saw refers to service to God by rendering obedience and adoration to Him. So, we see in this verse what our service to God in this day and time is to be: presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice. But how are we to do this? The verses that follow provide the answer:

- 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove *what is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

If we want to serve God, we are not to be “conformed to this world”. The word “world” is here from the Greek word *aiōn*, literally meaning “age” rather than a place. It’s the same word used in I Corinthians 2:6 and 2:8 (“princes of this world”) and in II Corinthians 4:4 (“the god of this world”, referring to the devil). In this verse it is a figure referring to the standards and the spiritual degradation in the world during this present age.

We are not to conform, or fashion our thoughts, according to the standards of this present world. Instead, to serve God we first must be “transformed by the renewing of our mind”. The word “transformed” is from the Greek word *metamorphoō*, from which we get the word “metamorphosis”. It’s the same word translated “transfigured” in both Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2, when Jesus Christ’s appearance was changed in a vision on a mountain; and this word is translated “changed” in II Corinthians 3:18 which says: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.”

The way we “transform”, or change, is by renewing our minds. If we were to work this in greater detail, we would find that to “renew one’s mind” is to hold the Word of God in mind and act accordingly. To do this, we need to hear and study God’s Word, retain it in our minds, and trust in God that as we walk out on it and take a stand, He will back us up.

Romans 12:2 concludes that as we renew our minds, we can “prove”, manifest or show by doing, the will, the passionate desire, of God, which is “good, and acceptable, and perfect”.

So, to serve God today, we renew our minds to His Word, holding it fast and walking accordingly. The remainder of Chapter 12 tells us how we are to serve God by serving others: and it takes a “renewed mind effort”. For example, we are to recognize that when we became born again, we each received the same “measure of faith” (verse 3), and we are each equally important members in the Body of Christ (verses 4 and 5). Each one of us has a long suit or best way to serve within this Body, and we should get busy doing it (verses 6 through 8).

Earlier we defined serving God as loving God and obeying His commandments. In Old Testament times, when believers were servants to God (the best that was available at that time), they were under “The Law”, numerous commandments they were to endeavor to obey as they served Him, their Master. Today, we, the born-again children of God, also serve God by obeying His commandments. But, because Jesus Christ totally fulfilled the Law and we are no longer under “the law of bondage”, we have a new commandment to obey as we serve Him. We know from the epistle of I John that God’s commandment to us is to “love one another”. So, today we serve God by serving others on a horizontal level.

Remember the great benefits and blessings that the Old Testament believers, who were servants to God, enjoyed as they trusted in God and served Him? We can believingly expect to receive the same as we, God’s children, serve God by serving others. It’s an on-going process that will provide us not only with a lifetime of benefits now but rewards in the future when Christ returns.

- Dr. Rick Batt