

Motives to Service

by A.B. Simpson

Our consecrated service to God is motivated by the cords of redemption, salvation, calling, sanctification, and the Holy Spirit, which bind us to the altar of service.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19

Topics: "Service", "Christian Motivation"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the importance of motives in our service to God, illustrating that our redemption, salvation, calling, sanctification, and the endowment of the Holy Spirit all bind us to a life of service. He argues that our Christian experiences and character development are not just for our benefit but are meant to help others, and that true joy comes from living a life of usefulness. Simpson encourages believers to recognize the preciousness of souls and the opportunities for service that God provides, urging them to respond to these calls with dedication and love. Ultimately, he reminds us that the love of Christ is the strongest motivation to serve, compelling us to offer our lives as living sacrifices on His altar.

Transcript

The sacrifice is our consecrated service to God and the cords which bind it to the altar are the motives, the impulses which ought to constrain us to a more earnest and entire devotion to Christ and to His work. God wants us so to yield ourselves, living sacrifices by the mercies of God, that we shall feel bound by a thousand cords on His altar--loving bonds, silken cords, that we would not break if we could.

1. The first motive which ought to hold us to serve the Lord Jesus Christ is the very fact of our redemption, for we are distinctly taught that we were not redeemed in any sense at all for our own selfish advantage. "Ye are not your own ye are bought with a price," the apostle says very solemnly, commencing his letter to the Corinthians; "therefore glorify God in your body, which is God's." If you were to buy a house you would think it strange if the seller should retain it for his own use and want to live in it himself and collect the rent. If you were to buy an article of value, you would be surprised if the seller should refuse to let you use it. And so the Lord has bought you; He has bought you to use you; bought you to be an instrument for His service and even though you have not performed the consecrating act, you are bound to belong to the Lord. You were consecrated by your redemption, and you are not your own, for you were bought with a price, and consecration is just coming up to your true obligations and returning that which is simply right; and so the mere fact that you have been redeemed by Christ should constrain you and bind you as a cord to the altar of service.

2. Our salvation binds us to the service of Christ. We were not saved for ourselves, but in order to serve the Lord. We find this in a great many passages. Especially you will remember what Paul says about his own salvation: "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first God might show a pattern of all longsuffering unto them that should after believe on Him to life everlasting.

So he says he was saved not for the sake of his own soul merely, but saved that he might save other souls. The very reason of his rescue from his awful and presumptuous iniquity is that he might save just men in coming days and so, if you have been saved strangely and wondrously, is for you to save others through God as strangely and wondrously; if you have been saved from any evil it is for you to save others from that evil; if you have been saved from some special form of sin, it is your ministry to rescue others from the same, so that your very salvation is a cord that binds you to the altar of God.

3. Again our calling and election are for service.

I don't use the term here with reference to our salvation, but I believe that these words, "calling and election," are used in the Scripture very emphatically with respect to our service and to our special standing as Christians after we have been saved.

When Peter says, "Make your calling and election sure," I think he means not our salvation at all, but some higher calling that comes after our salvation; our calling to a place of service and honor, our election to an office--if you might use the term in allusion to the human use of the word--to a position of trust and honor. You know that in the State men are called to positions of trust; elected to positions of honor, and so I think God uses this word to denote our being summoned by His Word and set apart by His gracious will to some place of special usefulness.

Now, we are told distinctly that we are called that we might serve. "Ye have not chosen Me," Christ said to His apostles, "but I have chosen you." What for? That you should go to heaven? No, that you should go and bring forth fruit, that your fruit should remain, and that your prayer should be so effectual that "whatever you ask in My name, I shall do it." That is your calling, chosen and ordained, that you should bring forth fruit and be a minister of blessing to others. Paul says, speaking of his calling and referring to the story of his conversion, and the words God said to him as soon as he was called from the dead: "I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." That was Paul's calling. God appeared to him in that moment to save him and give him a higher calling.

And so to you there comes a calling in life somewhere and sometime as surely as it came to Abram in that day in Ur of Chaldea, and he went forth not knowing whither; as surely as it came to Jacob, in the vision at Bethel by night; as surely as it came to Paul on the way to Damascus. God has called you and called me to some special mission in life--a work that nobody else can do, and that if you do not do, you shall stand at his judgment door recreant and condemned for neglect of your vocations. I don't know what your calling is. I think I know something of what mine was, and I am sure that if I had not listened and by His grace stood amid testings which made the blood quiver, I would have missed the blessings of my life, and perhaps others besides would have lost theirs.

God calls every one of you to some special duty. I mean that mission for Him which is the very meaning of life, and without which life will be a miserable mistake and prove a fraud at last; and all the wishes and desires you spent on yourselves were lost, and even you lost the thing you lived for--yourself.

4. Again, we are sanctified to serve God. Our sanctification is one of the cords which binds us to the altar of service. We are taught again, in another place: "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God."

Now, I used to think that we were sanctified at last in order to go to heaven--that the very last thing God did for the soul was to sanctify it, and that then He took it right home; and I will confess that I was a good deal afraid of being sanctified, at one time, for fear I would die very soon afterward; and I am afraid many people have the idea that sanctified people are not good for anything. But the Lord Jesus Christ tells us that we are sanctified in order to serve Him here. You cannot go forth and fight the enemy successfully until the victory is won in the citadel of your heart--in your own soul. While there is a revolution going on at home, you cannot have much foreign aggression. While sin is mastering you, you cannot do any work for Jesus. God wants you to get your victory from sin, in order that you may live a useful life and go forth with the prestige of that victory and overcome the world and the devil. And so this blessed experience that God has brought to you for the purpose of cleansing your soul from sin, means a life of service; and you will not be able to keep it up if it is going to make you join a sort of holy elite circle, enjoying your own blessing and wrapped up in your own comfort. No; only as you use it to bring others in can you keep what you have. Just as Joshua and the tribes of Israel when they entered into the land, it was that they might lead their brethren into the rest, and there was to be no rest for them until the Lord "had given their brethren rest, and they also shall have possessed the lands which the Lord gave them."

5. Again another cord that binds us to the altar is the enduement of the Holy Spirit, which is given us only for service, and which we can only keep while we consecrate it to the work of Jesus. "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." That is what you receive the power for; and the fact that you have received that divine Spirit is a solemn incentive and a strong motive that should lead you to use that trust for the highest ends for which God has given it. O, do not waste a treasure so unspeakably valuable. Don't let it be idly wasted away and expended in mere talk, mere personal enjoyment, mere idealism, but go forth with that higher power and work for others and for God, and thus keep the blessing which He has given only for service and only to them that obey.

I think it is Theodore Monod who speaks about a steam engine, and says: "Suppose I go to a locomotive, and say: 'What are you good for?' 'Well, I have got power.' 'What is your power good for?' 'Well, I can make a tremendous whistle.' 'Well,' he says; 'what is the good of a whistle? I want something that can do something--that can move these cars and carry these tons of freight along the track.'" And so, what is the good of your power if all that it does is to make a whistle, proclaiming how much power you have got? What God wants is the power that will carry other hearts and will bear the burdens of the Lord. How much are you bearing? What is your carrying power? That is the design of power. It is not what you say so much, but what are you doing and what are you bearing for Jesus Christ and His cause.

Well, this enduement of power which the Lord has given me, and I think God has given it to many of you, has been given for service. And it seems that a congregation who have known the Lord as you have known Him, a people that in the space of the last year have breathed in His very life and Spirit, as you have breathed Him in, should contain hidden elements of force and service which involve a tremendous responsibility. God has dropped celestial fire in your breast. O see to it that you kindle other fires and

cover the whole world and the whole circle of your life with the flames. I should be afraid--terribly afraid--to have been where many of you have been, and then relapse into an easy, self-indulgent life. I should be terribly afraid to have touched the coal of fire, as some of you have touched it, and to have bowed at His feet in solemn consecration, and today to be doing nothing for His kingdom, or doing less than God calls you to. May the Lord bind you to His altar with the cords of His own mighty indwelling and make you feel that to have God within your breast is a blessed privilege, but it is also a most sacred trust.

6. Again, our Christian experience is a motive to service. I mean by this that our Christian experience is given us not for our sake, but for the sakes of others. The way God leads you is intended to aid somebody else, the conflicts and victories that you have had are designed to enable you to help some fellow soldier in his strife. This is one of the deeper and mysterious principles of Christian life. "Whether we be afflicted," Paul says in II Cor., "whether we be afflicted, it is for your sake; whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." "God who comforteth us in all our trouble, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble with the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God." The strange furnace through which you passed was just a special instruction for the instrumentality which God was making out of you. The almost martyr sufferings that still make you quiver and ache, were to enable you to sympathise with some other suffering soul. And, therefore, no matter how God leads you, don't question Him, but say: "Lord, what does it mean? How can I consecrate it to You? I give my trials to You; I give my experience to You; I bind my life on Your altar by these quivering heart-cords of pain or joy to be Thine alike in both and all.

7. Again, our Christian character needs service for its development and its strength. The young convert of Gadara desired, we are told, to be with Christ as soon as he was saved; but Christ suffered him not, but said: "Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee and hath had compassion on thee." And he went home and published through Decapolis what great things the Lord had done. A poor, weak convert, afraid to be alone, he naturally clung to Jesus' side. But the Master knew he needed a firmer discipline, and so He said: "Go through the cities of northeastern Galilee, and tell them what you were and what you are, and get yourself so committed that you cannot go back again, and every word you speak and every testimony you give will grow stronger and bolder and more committed to Me, until you become so My representative that you could not turn recreant to Me even if you attempted to." And so this poor fellow, fresh from Christ, went as a missionary through that Eastern land and before three months had passed the whole region on that side of Galilee was wonderfully awakened, and they gathered together in such multitudes that Jesus had to feed the four thousand on the shores of the lake and could not send them away. But this poor fellow was the strongest of them all, and out of all the good he did, the best was the good he got. And so, dear young disciples, to grow strong you must testify to what God has given you. You must stand up for Christ fearlessly, uncompromisingly, and your Christian life must bind you as a sacrifice on the altar of the service of Jesus.

Someone has drawn a beautiful figure of a little mountain stream starting down from the hills, a little tiny thing, not more than a foot wide and two or three inches deep, skipping over the rocks and dancing along the cataracts, flowing through the meadows and bearing away down to the sea, and as it went along it passed a great big pool of water, and the pool spoke up and said: "Why so fast? Why are you in such a hurry? Why don't you be quiet like me? You seem to be very free with your water; you seem to forget that summer is coming on and you will be very glad to have a little of that abundance then that you are throwing away now and so recklessly dashing around you. You must be forgetting the days that are coming. Why don't you keep your treasures as I do?" But the little stream only answered by the dash of its

waters over the rocks and went on, not stopping to answer and pouring its waters generously away. And so the spring and the summer came. It was not long until the pool began to find itself deserted, and the very cattle of the wilderness were afraid to come near it; the birds would not rest in the branches above it; a filthy smell arose from its stagnant waters; the air caught the malaria and bore it along through the plains; but the little dancing river went dancing on and the branches of the trees spread themselves over, and the cattle came to drink, and the little birds sat by its banks and the more it ran the deeper it grew--a great river supplying the people with water, and pouring its overflow into the great sea.

Now, do not let us lose our lesson, I don't care about the picture. Let us get the spiritual truth. Don't let anything keep us from that. Don't you be like the stagnant pool. Don't be like the Christian, who keeps what he has hermetically sealed in his heart and pocketbook, but be like the little stream, growing as it gives, for the more we give the more we get. "What I kept, that I lost. What I gave, that I have," is the epitaph on an old tombstone and which we might well remember. And, so dear friends, if you would have the richest Christian character, if you would have the full tide of heavenly power, be like the little stream, give, and giving you shall grow. You might think as you look at your bathtub in your house full of water, that there was a great deal more water there than in the little lead pipe that connects it; that little inch pipe you would think could not hold as much water as the basin, but I tell you that in the course of twenty-four hours there is ten times as much water goes through that little inch pipe as is contained in the larger basin. Why? Because it is a conduit pipe. It is giving as it receives. I would rather be a little conduit pipe than the reservoir, which seems the larger, but is not really so. For your own Christian character and life as well as for the Lord, give yourself to a useful consecrated life.

8. Then, again, our happiness, our real joy, ought to bind us to the altar of service. I mean by that a life of usefulness is the only happy Christian life. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven. Blessed are those who hunger, etc. There are a score of blessings! There is one little "more blessed," but it is better than them all. It is more blessed to give than to receive. It is one of the speeches of Jesus which Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have omitted. It is one of the little words of Christ that is not recorded there; but God thought so much of it, He made it a little fifth Gospel. Paul caught it up before it was lost and has given it to us and I am so glad he did, for in some respects it transcends any of the others. It makes you glad; it saves you from a thousand petty self-seeming cares and trials.

Someone has said in poetry:

Wouldst thou from sorrow find a sweet relief,

Or wouldst thou seek support for woes untold,

Balm wouldst thou gather for corroding grief,

Pour blessings round thee like a shower of gold?

'Tis when the rose is wrapped in many a fold,

Close to its heart the worm is wasting there.

Many are living in a little world of their own trouble and sorrow. I never knew a sad soul yet that had broken out from life thus to go and live for Christ and for others. It is not possible to be overcome by grief and depression when you rise into the life of love. It is yourself that makes you morose because you are

losing something or suffering something. It is the curse of Satan. It was the thing that made the devil a devil; that he ceased to live for God and began to live for himself. It will make anybody a devil, unless he turns from it. Self-love, self-pride, self-care, how they cling to you with such an instinct of fear that you are going to lose something. O, how sad it is! And it is the cause of all your miseries. But if you would live for others and be large-hearted and consecrated, you would be happy; your cares would be exchanged for His; you would cease to bear your burdens and you would bear your Master's, and He says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

And then there is a deeper joy. There is the joy of Christ's love and Christ's benevolence and sympathy for others. Do you know what it is? Some of you do. There is no deeper joy in Christian hearts, perhaps, than the joy of bringing souls to Christ, the joy of seeing lives transformed, wrecked homes made happy and souls forever saved. This is the joy that comes from the service of God. May it bind your hearts and lives on the altar of God, a living sacrifice.

9. Another of the cords that ought to bind us is the value of the soul--the preciousness of the human soul. It seems there can be no motive stronger than this. Paul was bound on the altar by this cord. He says: "I have great heaviness and sorrow in my heart continually because of my brethren that are not saved. Those that have looked into the eternity and have measured the value of Christ's blood and Christ's warnings and invitations feel likewise that they cannot rest while there will be one soul unsaved that they can rescue, and as Richard Knill used to say: "If there was but one man alive on earth unsaved and that one man was in Siberia, and it was necessary to save him every Christian in the world should go to him and plead with him, it would be worthwhile for all the fifteen hundred millions of people on the earth to go and plead with that one man, for eternity is so immeasurably long, and misery and joy forever mean so much, that it would repay us." We do not see it dear friends, now, but we have just got flashes of it; but when the lurid clouds of the great day shall be around us and the vanities of earth will be drifting like smoke and lost men like chaff in the storm, and those that you have known shall look back with one upbraiding glance, and the Lord will look on you as if to say: "Was this all you cared for Me?" O we will understand it then! May God help us to know it better, to preach as if we saw it, to pray as if we felt it, and to labor for it as for our own salvation.

10. Our opportunities for service give another powerful incentive to work for Christ. Every such opportunity is a direct call of God, and the special openings for service which we find in this day on every hand, seem to say as never before: "How knowest thou whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

There never was a time when deeper tides were moving in human hearts and a profounder hunger was crying for a living God and a full salvation. A silent revolution is passing over the Church of God, in which men and women are awaking to the need of something greater than ideas, organisations and works, and must have LIFE and POWER. It is a time for earnest work and testimony. O may God give us "understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do," and make us prompt, and wise and true. It is harvest time and harvest work waits not for our convenience. It is urgent work, immediate work, work which cries: "Son go work today in my vineyard." By every call of opportunity "bind ye the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar."

11. Another bond of obligation is found in the ample resources which Christ has given us for His work. If He sent us in our own strength or inadequately furnished, we might, perhaps, plead some excuse. But He has provided all grace, "so that we always having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work." The talents in the parable of Matt. xxv and the pounds in that of Luke xix do not denote our natural

endowments of mind or circumstances, but those free gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are offered "to every man to profit withal," and we have but to take freely of His abundant grace and use it for His work. This renders the plea of weakness inexcusable and makes the sin of neglecting such costly divine provisions very great indeed. Let us therefore "receiving a kingdom, which cannot be moved, have grace that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and a godly fear."

12. Another bond and impulse of service is the great reward which He has promised to those who faithfully follow Him in the "path of labor and suffering." "They shall shine as the stars forever and ever." "They shall sit with Me in My throne." When we see that recompense we shall be ashamed of our hardest sacrifice and we shall cry: "Not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory." Ten cities for ten pounds well spent, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory for every weight of toil and pain. O it will seem too much for such poor work, and we shall cast the crowns at His blessed feet and cry: "Thou art worthy only to receive the glory."

Finally, His own dear love to each one of us is the strongest cord. Think how He has saved us, loved us, led us and blessed us every one, and the highest offering is "little to give to Him," as a dying mother said when asked if she could give up her darling children; "Do you always feel thus?" they asked the pilgrim. "When I look at my white garments, which the shining ones gave me, that will do it; and when I look at yonder celestial hills and think of the city, whither I am going, that will do it; and when I look back to the cross where He died for me and where I lost my burden, that will do it." So let us look in, and look back and look forward, and "bind the sacrifice with cords even to the horns of the altar."

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