

The Service of Sisters.

BY ONE OF THEMSELVES.



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DEAR SISTERS IN CHRIST,

It may be good for us, in this day when there is so much talk about the "equality of the sexes," and when there are a large number of women-preachers, to see from God's Word what is our proper place and sphere of work.

That there is work for us I have not the least doubt, but the question is: What form should it take?

That a woman should not teach in the assembly, or even speak is plain from 1 Corinthians xiv. 34, 35, "Let your women *keep silence* in the churches [assemblies]: for it is not

permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for *it is a shame* for women to speak in the church."

Does the flesh rebel against these plain words? Very probably. But you may be sure it is the flesh, and therefore it must be judged in humble contrition before God. You get this and more brought out, too, in 1 Tim. ii. 9-15. By-the-by, here is one way in which we may do good—by dressing soberly, neatly, and modestly, and being adorned "with good works." Beloved sisters, let us see to it that our manner of life is worthy of the gospel of Christ. "Actions speak louder than words." Let our lives be so evidently godly that we shall truly be "the epistle of Christ . . . written not with ink,

but with the Spirit of the living God."

It seems to me, too, that a woman's special forte lies in prayer. A sister who is in constant communion with her Lord, walking with Him, being so near Him that she is guided by His eye, is a great source of blessing, both in her home life, her social life, and in the assembly. I sincerely believe that even *one* sister in an assembly, who comes straight from the presence of God, partaking unsparingly of His blessed, divine nature, her heart full of praise to the Lord and love to His people, is of immense value to the assembly, though she is entirely silent.

Do you complain that the meetings are dull? Let me advise you. Before you go to the next meeting, get down on your knees, and enter into the very presence of your Saviour and Friend; so deeply drink in His love

that your cup runs over in spontaneous worship and adoration. I don't think you will find that meeting dull. You should not go to meet the brothers or other sisters merely, but to meet the blessed Lord. Remember He is in the midst, and your heart will rejoice in the knowledge of it. A light heart and a bright face will work wonders.

Are some of my sisters who read this wives? And is your husband a Christian? If he is, what blessed fellowship you may have, what unity of heart, what holy love! If he is one of the Lord's labourers, see that he gets no worries that you can possibly spare him, that his mind may be as undistracted as possible for the Lord's work. When he comes home weary, and sometimes a little discouraged at the evident rejection of Christ which is displayed by hard-hearted sinners, give him a smile of

welcome, let him feel that he has your sympathy ; but, also, remind him that “his labour is *not* in vain in the Lord.” Bid him keep his eye fixed on his Master, and leave results to Him.

But it may be some of my dear sisters have unconverted husbands. It is sad for you, very sad, I know ; but go straight on in the narrow path, follow Jesus the Great Shepherd ; fear no evil, for He is with you. I know just how your heart must ache, as you kneel by your bedside, feeling all the distance between your loved one and yourself ; but pour out your troubled heart to the Lord Jesus. He knows all about it ; He feels for you ; He knew what it was to be misunderstood, to be lonely. Yes, He understands it all. Are you weary, discouraged, with the utter separation existing between you and that one who is so dear ?

Hear the sweet words of the Lord Jesus, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The burden is too great for you to bear alone; you must share it with Him. Put yourself under one yoke with Him. Ah! He can fill your soul with His peace and joy. Oh, let me beseech you, don't let a cloud, however small, come between your Saviour and you; walk so much in the light of His presence that your husband will be compelled to own the reality of the Christian life, the beauty of it, and so will desire to be in that holy light himself.

Are there any mothers reading this paper? Ah! what a grand work you have before you. Just think of it! that God has given into your keeping those little lives which are so precious to you. He has lent them to you; God grant they may all be returned to Him again by-and-by. What

prayer and watchfulness you need that your example may be a beautiful picture of Christian living; that your children may hear from your lips nothing impure, or foolish and ill-seasoned jesting; that your ways may be a bright testimony for your Lord. You need great wisdom to train them up in the knowledge and fear of God. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Timothy had known the Scriptures from a child (2 Tim. iii. 15); his mother and grandmother were both godly women (2 Tim. i. 5). I like to imagine the blessed times Timothy's mother must have had teaching her boy the Holy Scriptures, fixing the portions upon his memory, and with joy seeing that his heart was touched by them. Ah! mothers, you need not look around

you for work ; yours is truly a noble sphere of service.

But we are not all wives and mothers. Still, God has not left us without our sphere of usefulness ; blessed be His Name. It does not strike me as being a work of God for women to stand upon platforms addressing crowds of people. Rather this seems to me to shame our womanhood ; but if we must preach, let it be to one person at a time. No one, I think, can forbid us individual work. If the Lord has been turning souls to Him through the gospel, and there are anxious souls at the after-meetings, what a grand thing for you to sit beside the penitent sinner with an open Bible and a prayer on your lips, to lead the burdened one to Jesus. Ah ! yes, one soul won for Christ is more than worth the labour of a whole lifetime. Andrew is a disciple we

hear little of, but he did a great work. He brought at least one soul to Jesus, and that one was his brother Peter; and just see what a great work Peter did. So let us cheer up; if we cannot bring a hundred, the dear Lord may use His "weaker vessels" to save one, and that one may have the joy of being the means of the salvation of many more.

Again, if there is trouble about us, there is a place for woman's tender sympathy. If illness, let us, if possible, relieve the tired mother, or daughter, or sister, by sitting up a night or so with the sick one, or by ministering to them in any one of the thousand ways which love suggests. If death has come to any near us, let us go to the sorrowing friends, not with petty gossip or innumerable questions as to the last hours of the departed, but with hearts full of sympathy—just a

pressure of the hand, a loving look, a word from God's own book; the comfort of those who have themselves known sorrow, and have also known the tender comfort of the One who wept over the grave of Lazarus.

Romans xvi. is intensely interesting to me. Paul so affectionately remembers all those who were working for the Lord, the sisters as well as brothers. In the first verse you get Phebe, a servant of the Church at Cenchrea. How careful is the apostle over her as he asks that the assembly at Rome will "receive her in the Lord," and assist her in any way she might need. Then he tells us why he so values her. "She hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." Now, dear sisters, here is a hint for some of us. Could we not receive a labouring brother into our homes sometimes? And if

that brother's ministry was greatly blessed of God, how glad we should feel that we had invited him to come.

In the sixth verse Paul sends a greeting to a sister at Rome, Mary, "who bestowed much labour on us." Many of us, who could not receive a brother at our house, might bestow labour on them. Let us look out well to the bodily needs of those who have ministered to our soul-needs. "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

Paul does not forget his mother, among all his numerous friends. (See *v.* 13.) Then, among children, there is much we can do. We may have a class to read the Scriptures with those whose parents do not do so. But let us be very careful that we do not make the class a formidable thing to them. Children need love and cheerfulness. Win their hearts, and their ears will be open to hear you. Come

down from the overwhelming heights of adult life, and become "as a little child" among them. Be simple, patient, and, above all, show them that you love them.

Have you unconverted friends? You need to live very near the Lord, or you will get entangled with the affairs of this world. I was reading the other day of the way in which a small spider entrapped a snake into his web, the snake, of course, being many times larger than its enemy. It spun one tiny, almost invisible thread around the reptile, which was unconscious of the operation, or it might, by the least movement, have snapped the slender bond. Then another and another thread was spun from the body of the little spider, the snake all the while blissfully ignorant of the fact. But that spider was so quick and busy that ere long quite a large web was made,

and the reptile so artfully caught in its meshes that there was no escape for it. Is there not a great lesson for us in this, dear sisters? Our worldly friends spin first one silken cord of pleasure around us and then another, until, alas! we scarcely know whether we belong to the world or to Christ. But let us ever keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus with simple trust, saying, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." Ah! we need to keep "unspotted from the world." When we have to do with those who know not our Lord, let it be with great prayer and watchfulness, and a message of Jesus on our lips.

Whether our service be great or small, much or little, let it be done "as unto the Lord," and we may be sure that the dear Saviour, who was always so sweetly tender with the women and children when on earth,

will not forget "our work and labour of love." And like the woman of Samaria, let our message be, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" The result is, "Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him."

May the Lord so fill us with *His* love that our hearts may run over in love to others. R. S.

