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him from error. Perhaps his enemies hoped God would slay him for such disobedience: even if not, his authority as an upholder of the Law would be finished.

Realisation of God's Work. The completion of the wall in spite of so many difficulties—and many Jews were in league with the enemy (v. 18)—made his enemies realise that this was indeed a work of God (v. 16). After that the opposition does not seem to have been active, but it still continued (v. 19).

(To be continued)

PEN PORTRAITS FROM OLD RECORDS

W. WILCOX

2. Potters and Planters (1 Chron. 4: 22, 23)

Interspersed among these names there is found a delightful picture of ancient workers. It is not made clear who they were, and so they must pass down in the records with myriads of other un-named workers who, nevertheless, did their tasks well, fulfilled their duties faithfully, and so are fitted for honourable mention. It is not the high nature of the task, but the faithful discharge of daily duties that bring to these a distinctive place among so numerous a company of worthy men. Their work was of a humble nature, including the making of the earthen vessels for the use of the King's household, and in the cultivation of crops for food supplies. The performance of their tasks helped in its orderly arrangements and so was of material aid to the work of the Kingdom.

So it is in every society—there are those un-noticed and un-named without whose faithful service the society could not cohere or function. In the Christian community it is so, there ever being in the local church a number whose service is necessary, but which is so regarded that it obtains no honourable mention and receives little, if any, recognition.

But in our record there was one who recognized its value, and he kept these workers near to his palace and ever in attendance.

'They 'dwelt with the King' and were ready at all times 'for his work'. Here lay their claim to distinction, it was *his* work in which they were engaged, and to do this efficiently, it entailed dwelling *with* him at all times. Of necessity their own homes might be on the boundaries of the palace area, or among the plants and hedges where their work chiefly lay, nevertheless, they dwelt *with the King*.

In our day we, too, are called to be co-workers with God. That work may be of a very humble character, but to carry it out in the spirit of fellowship with our great Co-worker, it is necessary to dwell with Him. What does this dwelling *with* the King involve? To dwell with Him is:

1. To know Him in all the intimacies of life. It is to *know* Him and so to plan our every task in life in the light of that knowledge, to do what we know will please Him and to accomplish that which will serve His ends.

To be so acquainted with Him will call for the daily dwelling and constant intercourse with Him, the daily observance of His ways and of the workings of His mind, and the daily increase of understanding of what is His purpose to accomplish.

2. To work *with* Him, not only *for* Him. There was much that these men might do *for* the King which, while of some value, might not rise to the sublime heights of working *with* Him, with Him in a close fellowship, with Him in an honoured companionship, with Him in a similarity of interest, and with Him in the achievement of His ends. It is to be feared that much of our service is *for* Him, i.e., we associate His Name with it, we attempt to proclaim His Gospel or minister His Word, we apply ourselves to tasks which appear to be His will, but without the power of this hallowed necessity of being *with* Him, of having first been in His Presence, of having so assimilated His Truth as to give it out as He would and as He wills.

3. To grow like Him, having so dwelt with Him as to have imbibed His thoughts and imitated His ways. How obstinate and intolerant we often become in our service, whereas He would tenderly and patiently deal with that weaker or straying plant, bringing it to the light, and training it by means of another's

help until it is strong enough to stand on its own. How lax and indulgent we oft-times are, tolerating that which are but weeds, and which if allowed to grow, will become rank, and crowd out and choke that which would be fruitful for His purpose. From these two extremes we may be kept if, in dwelling with Him, we grow like Him.

4. To count the privilege as entailing responsibility, each to be enjoyed in its several relations. There is the tendency to exalt the privilege and shirk the responsibility. It may even be that some will be so obsessed with the greatness of the responsibility that they lose the enjoyment that a sense of the privilege is bound to bring. To use another metaphor, as employed by our Lord, we are called to take His yoke—there is the privilege; and learn of Him—there is the responsibility. In the former we align ourselves with Him, share His task, and pursue the same ends, a privilege indeed. In the latter we are trained to the task, as we pursue it with Him, disciplined under His constraining Yoke, guided as His Yoke-fellow, and kept in the task as His companion, a vital responsibility.

5. To remember always that the work is *His*. It is not *our* work, save as He assigns *His* task to us. As *His* work it demands:

(a) *High Standards*. There is nothing disorderly with Him, and there is nothing but what reaches high standards. Low ideals never accomplish much. Too much of Christian Service is done in a desultory sort of way, in slipshod fashion, and in carefree attitudes! We need hardly wonder why so little is achieved. High standards are worth aiming at, even if they be not reached, for the higher they reach, the nearer they will be to His ideal.

(b) *A lively Interest*. Work becomes dull indeed if there is no real interest taken in it. We may think of these potters taking care to use the finest clay, to shape the comeliest vessel, to produce the kind of pot most suited for its intended purpose; or the gardeners to plant the best type of vegetable, to seek to secure the largest yield, and to suit the appetite of the King, with the choicest products of their toil. Here a lively interest is taken so that in everything the result may give him pleasure.

In like manner the believer in all his service for the Lord

should seek with earnest care and renewed diligence to give of his best to gain the highest result and to give the greatest pleasure to the One with and for Whom he works.

(c) *Great Ends*. There must be purpose in all toil if it is to be highly productive. Toil without such purpose will be like a flabby football with no resilience in it; you may kick it hard but it won't go far. But if there be purpose known and appreciated, the toil will become less burdensome, and so move on stage by stage until its end is accomplished.

It is sometimes salutary to halt in our manifold activities and question ourselves as to why we are doing this or that, and so discover to ourselves whether our aim be right, or even if there be an aim at all. If there be no real aim our ministry will be like an arrow without a barb. It may reach its target but fail to fasten itself there and so accomplish little.

Let us learn from this ancient record:

1. *To dwell with the King*. This is a continuous day by day business. Mere spasmodic efforts to come and to go, to do and to refrain, will be of little use. Dwell daily with Him. To use the picture employed by our Lord, '*Except ye abide in Me ye cannot bear much fruit*'.

2. *To do the humble tasks well*, seeing they are to be done for Him. Great ends may be served by humble acts. Do not let us think that we must wait until we can do some spectacular thing, or we cannot serve God. In the lowly duty that lies to our hand there is an opportunity to become a co-worker in the achievement of some great purpose.

3. To make this the motto of our service: '*We serve the Lord Christ*'. Then all base motives will be banished as unworthy to be named along with His Name. On the other hand the meanest task will become gilded with the Glory of His Name and resplendent with the beauty of His Presence, as it is done for His pleasure and Glory.

Let us not lower our standards, become faint-hearted, or fail to remember our association with Him in His work. But daily as we fulfil the commission given by our Lord remember His promise: 'Lo, I am with you day by day even to the close of the age'.