

Service 5 - Breaking the Alabaster Jar

1. 2 Samuel 23:18, 24, 37 - Joab's alabaster jar:

- This passage records that among David's mighty warriors, there are Joab's two brothers, Abishai and Asahel, as well as the men who carried Joab's weapons, but Joab himself is notably absent!
- The Bible includes many accounts about Joab. From the beginning, he faithfully followed King David, to the extent that he even participated in the king's wrongdoing, such as orchestrating the death of Uriah; he did whatever the king commanded. When David ordered a census, Joab would even offer advice, saying, "My lord the king, this is not good!" So why did Joab end up with such a tragic fate, and why is he not mentioned among David's mighty warriors?
 - Joab had a personal ambition: he wanted to be the commander-in-chief. Although he served King David faithfully, when David appointed Abner as the commander, Joab could not tolerate it and killed Abner. Joab also killed another commander appointed by David. Thus, it is evident that Joab's ambition to be the commander-in-chief was his "alabaster jar," which he never broke.
- This kind of situation could likely happen to us as well. If we serve God faithfully but have not broken our alabaster jar—still clinging to the desire for a certain position, hoping that God values and uses us the most, and wanting to remain in that position—then one day, if God does not use us, we might not be able to tolerate it. This would indicate that our "alabaster jar" has not been broken.
- Joab's "alabaster jar" was his desire to be the commander-in-chief, his ambition for personal achievement and to be recognized and used by the king. If Joab truly loved the king and had broken his "alabaster jar," he would have followed the king closely, saying, "King, you see that Abner is more helpful to your kingdom; if you choose Abner as the commander, I will follow him." But he did not, which led to his tragic end.
 - Most of us love the Lord and are willing to serve Him. However, the degree of our love for the Lord can vary greatly, and there may still be many selfish motives mixed in. We need to understand the true state of our own hearts.
- A brother among us once said, "Pastor Grace, I am a very fleshly person with many opinions, so I am not suitable for service right now. Serving God is such a noble and glorious thing; I am willing to do whatever He asks, but I just don't want to have a public role." This is someone who truly loves God and knows himself well. When we genuinely love God, we understand that there can be no personal ambition mixed into His kingdom. When our fleshly desires are strong and we have many personal opinions, we might ruin the work of God's kingdom. However, he is still eager to serve the King, so whatever the King asks, he is willing to do.
- Can I serve Jesus like Mary did, truly serving Him out of love? What kind of love is this? It is a love that pours out everything; a spontaneous love; a sacrificial love; a love that disregards one's own reputation; a love that doesn't care about how others might criticize or gossip. This is the kind of service God wants from us.

- Jesus often hinted to His disciples, saying, “The Son of Man must go to Jerusalem, be killed, and on the third day rise again.” Jesus mentioned this many times, but the disciples never truly took it to heart. As a result, none of them attended to Jesus’s needs. Why was Mary able to serve Jesus at the right time, with her service being so enjoyable and precious to Him that Jesus said, “What she has done will be told in memory of her wherever the gospel is preached”? I believe the biggest secret is that Mary was deeply interested in Jesus. She was not interested in the miracle of the loaves and fishes feeding five thousand people; she was not excited about Jesus healing the leper or giving sight to the blind. Her interest was simply in Jesus Himself. She often sat at Jesus’s feet, listening with her whole heart and spirit, attentively discerning His needs. When we are with such a God, do we often consider that He also has needs? Most of the time, we only think about what we can get from Him, but Mary always thought, “What can I do to serve Jesus? What can I offer to satisfy Him?”
2. **Luke 10, John 12:26** “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.” The most important thing for someone serving God is to follow Him, but the disciples did not grasp this. Jesus gave authority to seventy disciples and sent them out. When they returned, they excitedly said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name; Father, Your name is truly marvelous!” They were thrilled by the miracles they performed and the fact that even demons obeyed them. However, they did not realize that being with Jesus and following Him closely was the greatest thing of all.
- Jesus said that these things are hidden from the wise but revealed to infants. Why is this? The wise often have many interests and their eyes are constantly looking at many things, wanting everything. In contrast, infants only need milk and crave pure spiritual milk. Jesus said, "Yes, Father, for this was Your gracious will." Then He continued, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it; to hear what you hear, but did not hear it." The disciples were with Jesus every day, so they did not feel a sense of excitement. This is a natural tendency: people are often excited by new things, but even something as precious as manna becomes routine if experienced daily.
 - An infant is never tired of nursing; it continuously seeks milk. Thus, God tells us to crave pure spiritual milk like infants—desiring His word and Himself. There is a secret here: if anyone serves Me, they must follow Me. No matter where we are, the most important thing is to continually follow Him, paying attention to whether He is still present. We should not be excited merely by effectiveness or miraculous manifestations. If we continually practice this, God can lead us to a childlike simplicity—where simply following Him, being where He is, becomes our greatest joy and satisfaction. When our hearts are in this state, God can use us to accomplish many amazing acts of service.
 - There is a brother who has always loved and pursued the Lord. Naturally, God placed a burden for loving the church within him. Recently, during a revival meeting, while he was at work, an idea suddenly came to him, like water being poured over his head, saying, "For the revival meeting, it would be best to rent a basement." Praise the Lord! Because the place where we gathered could not accommodate everyone. This brother felt that God is always looking for someone who can hear His voice, someone who truly cares about His affairs. If you faithfully follow God, constantly loving and drawing near to Him, and take upon yourself the matters of God's house; when there is a need in God's house, God will remind you.
 - We are so important and precious in God’s eyes. He wants us to follow Him and work with Him. His

will needs to be carried out on this earth through us, and God is always searching for such people. Perhaps many of us are already serving in the church, but why do we often fail to hear God's voice? It might be because we are not faithfully following Him.

3. **John 12:23-26** “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me;”

- What kind of following is described here? It is a following to the extent that we are willing to lose our lives for the Lord, to die like a grain of wheat, buried in the ground. It may seem as though nothing is being accomplished, as though there are no visible results, yet it is buried for a greater purpose.
- Some people are called by God to be intercessors and that is a kind of laboring in prayer.

God placed the burden of intercession on a co-worker of Finney. Sometimes he would pray throughout the day, shedding tears; to others, it might seem a bit eccentric, as he would even skip meals while continuing to pray. Finney said, "When I went to that city and the Holy Spirit brought such a great revival, it was because this brother had first labored in prayer there." This is like a grain of wheat falling to the ground and dying, being buried, and then producing many seeds; he did not stand before the people, but silently followed God in prayer.

Whenever Moody preached, two elderly sisters would sit in the front row, continuously praying for him, which made Moody's preaching incredibly powerful. Moody said, "In heaven, these two sisters will receive a reward at least as great as mine, and perhaps even greater!" Because these sisters did not receive rewards on earth, their reward in heaven will be greater. God's kingdom needs a group of people who truly follow Him, even to the extent of being buried in the ground, laying down their lives for Him; He says such people will receive eternal life.

- Revelation speaks of the 144,000, who have a distinct characteristic: besides being virgins, they follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They do not say, "The places the Lamb is going to are too difficult, I'm not interested; and they are too dangerous!" They simply follow Him. God deeply needs such people.
- The Son of God gave His life in exchange for our broken and tarnished lives. Therefore, it is only natural for us to lay down our lives for Him, because He gave His life for us, freeing us from the powers of darkness. Are you willing to exchange your broken and tarnished life for God's? Many people do not understand this principle of exchange; they just want Jesus to love them, fill them more, bless them, and anoint them. He is willing to give, but you must first surrender your broken and tarnished life for Him to work in you! The more you surrender, the more He can replace; have you truly surrendered?

4. **John 4:34** “ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

- A brother shared that he had planned to earnestly pursue the Lord during the summer conference, meaning he wanted to spend more time kneeling at the front. However, he was assigned many

responsibilities during the conference. He first had to take children and teenagers to San Francisco to distribute flyers. When he returned and found there wasn't enough bread, he made sure the children had some before he ate. He then led the youth in worship and found that God's presence was even more glorious than in the adult gatherings. He realized that it was because he had obeyed, putting aside his desires and needs to serve the children. God often rewards those who serve selflessly in this way. After leading the worship, he wanted to join the adult meeting quickly but was asked to pray for the children instead. He obeyed again. Once all the children's activities were done, he felt a lot of back and waist pain from being tired and hungry. He went back to his place, knelt down, and drew near to the Lord. He said that God's presence was so great that it healed his pain completely, and he felt full and no longer hungry. He reflected that despite attending many conferences throughout his life, he had never experienced as much service as he did at this one. Yet, the blessings he received, the presence of God, the inner expansion, joy, and satisfaction were all unprecedented.

Brothers and sisters, we should remember this: when we follow God, obey Him, and serve Him daily, God becomes our satisfaction, and in this way we continue to grow.

- Perhaps some people always just want to receive and experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit but remain small in their growth, because their vessel is small and often self-centered. Just like Joab, who served the king with a self-centered attitude and thus did not receive honor; his name was not among the king's mighty warriors. Many of us are the same. We are willing to pursue the Lord, but when God asks us to serve someone or help with something, we refuse and only want to focus on pursuing the Lord here. As a result, we push away the blessings. God wants to expand our tent, to enlarge the dwelling place within us, because His gifts and Spirit are limitless. But how can such a small vessel be expanded? Often it happens when you are in difficult or tiring situations, when others are in need and you are willing to give of yourself. In such moments, you are being enlarged, and the Lord's presence becomes richer and harder to lose.
- Some people are naturally active and eager to serve; such individuals may need to learn to kneel quietly before the Lord and seek Him first. However, others may not be very interested in serving and just want to receive. If you are always the first to rush to the front, you need to pay attention: "Lord, what do You want?" If you can't hear what the Lord wants, you might want to ask a pastor or counselor, "Is there anything needed in God's house that I can help with?" This way, your pursuit will be more grounded, and God's presence will be more real in your life.
- Brothers and sisters! Let us consider what kind of God we have. Is He a selfish God? No, He is not. Therefore, He could never give His presence to a selfish person. Our God is a loving God, a compassionate God, one who gives generously. Jehovah delights in mercy and in showing grace! Therefore, our character must reflect this as well. If there are needs in God's house, we should be willing to serve and give, so that God can dwell comfortably within us. When we come to God's house, we shouldn't always just pray for ourselves. We should inquire if there are needs for which we can intercede, so that we may truly receive from God. Pursuing the Lord is a genuine matter; it cannot be achieved through shortcuts or by seeking personal gain.
- If we recognize that all circumstances are measured out by the Lord, we should be willing to break our precious alabaster jar, the thing we value most (such as wanting to participate fully in a conference), because the Lord has a need, so we offer it up. The Lord then fills us with His fragrance, which overflows. We should continually ask, "Lord, what is my alabaster jar?" Often, it is our "self." Our "self" is like a strong wall, a treasured and precious alabaster jar. It could be our accumulated Bible study materials, our experience in service, our savings, or the achievements of our children—these are the ointments we have accumulated within. These ointments are meant to be

applied to ourselves, but we are willing to break them and pour them out on Jesus.

5. Rick Joyner's Vision

- Rick Joyner was a prophet greatly used by God. When he went to heaven, God said to him, "There is a time to plant and a time to harvest. Wisdom is being able to understand these specific moments; true wisdom is recognizing God's timing and seizing the right moments to follow Him."
- If God asks us to serve at this moment and we respond, "Oh no! I can't right now; I need to wait on the Lord!"—in fact, obeying the Lord and serving at that moment can bring you more of God's presence than sitting around waiting for Him for three hours! Moreover, if you serve without a willing heart or a love for God—if you serve with reluctance, dissatisfaction, or complaints, or feel that you are being unfairly burdened with too much service—such a mindset will not help you receive the anointing! The blessings that God intended for you will be missed entirely.
- Rick Joyner originally did not want to leave the garden of heaven, but God told him to go down the mountain and fight battles for other soldiers. Only after he obeyed and descended did he experience that the garden was actually within him. Even though God told him, "The garden is within you," Rick Joyner couldn't grasp this concept; he only felt, "Heaven is so wonderful; I don't want to go. This truly feels like the greatest loss of my life."

Brothers and sisters! Often, we need to obey and follow the Lamb, following whatever He commands. You might say, "Yes, if the Lord clearly tells me what to do, I would be willing." However, until you learn to obey those around you, it is difficult to hear the Lord's voice. You must first learn to obey visible people before you can obey the invisible God. As God says, "If you cannot love the brother you can see, you cannot love the God you cannot see." Similarly, if you cannot obey those you can see, you cannot obey the God you cannot see. God places us in circumstances to learn obedience, which is intended to bless us. If you accept these situations joyfully, you will discover that the Lord's grace is immense!

Conclusion

- Watchman Nee once said, "The extent to which you are willing to be poured out is the extent to which you will receive power. Your true usefulness in God's hands is measured by how much you are willing to be poured out for Him." If I am someone who is never willing to be poured out—if I require at least eight hours of sleep before I can serve, if I cannot handle unreasonable requests, if I have to focus on my job and other matters—then I will not be very useful in God's hands. We need to understand clearly what it means to serve God in a way that satisfies Him, rather than seeking more opportunities for practice, more gifts, or more anointing for ourselves. The purpose of the gospel is to bring satisfaction to the Lord. If I am unwilling to pour myself out for the Lord, He will never be satisfied. Only when I pour myself out completely for Him will He be satisfied.
- Sometimes God gives us opportunities to serve to see if we are willing to offer ourselves. At other times, He seems to set us aside or stop our service. This is God's way of making us pause and reflect on what truly captures our hearts—whether it is the act of serving or God Himself. If we do not know what to do when our service is paused, it reveals that our purpose in life is merely to be busy with service, rather than continually pouring our love onto Jesus. If our purpose is to continually

pour our love onto Jesus, then whether the Lord uses us or not, we will still joyfully serve Him and pour our love onto Him every day without any difference.

- God must transform us to be like Mary, sitting before Him every day, listening to His commands, and pouring out our love upon Him. This is the most satisfying form of service to Him, a service performed in the Holy of Holies. When we regularly sit before Him and keep His commands, our lives will naturally be filled with service. God will often prompt you to call someone, visit someone, share the gospel with someone, or counsel someone at any moment.

In gatherings, God will ignite a fervent heart within you, prompting you to rise and worship Him and serve Him. Whenever you meet someone, you are serving them; service is ongoing at all times. This is what a normal, healthy Christian life looks like. It's the kind of life we are all called to live: serving Him with our whole heart and soul, dedicating our entire lives to serving and following Him.

Service 5 Questions

1. Why was Joab not listed among David's mighty warriors?
2. When David chose Abner as the commander, Joab could not accept it. Have you experienced something similar in service or at work? If so, how did you respond?
3. Jesus often spoke of going to Jerusalem and dying, but the disciples did not listen. How was Mary able to serve Jesus appropriately at the right time? What was her secret?
4. Jesus gave authority to seventy disciples and sent them out. Why were they so excited when they returned? When Jesus later said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see," what was He referring to?
5. Have you ever experienced this: because you were faithful in what God entrusted to you, He revealed needs to you in advance?
6. "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me." What does "following" mean in this context?
7. Are you someone who is active and enjoys being busy with service, or do you prefer seeking the Lord but avoid serving? Reflect on how you can improve to make your pursuit more solid.
8. What did God say to Rick Joyner about true wisdom?
9. Matchman Nee once said: "The more you are willing to pour yourself out, the more you will receive _____! And your true usefulness in God's hands is measured by how much you are willing to be _____ in His hands."
10. Have you ever experienced God halting your service? If so, how did it make you feel (abandoned, discouraged, frustrated, etc.)? What was most compelling to your heart at that time?
11. Memorize: John 4:34; John 12:23-26.

