

ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST

Romans 12

Throughout the pages of God's Word, there are great characters that shine with a radiance undimmed by the passing centuries and unsullied by the tide of wickedness and moral decay of their own generations.

Like monuments in the Hall of Fame they stand in mighty stature to inspire and to challenge us today.

They have ceased to breathe, and live, and move among men; but their lives will never cease to speak. Each individual in his own sphere and own order, made his contribution and by some outstanding trait of character, some talent possessed, or some task well done, distinguished himself from among his fellowmen, making him immortal.

By studying lives of great men and women, we can almost without exception discover the source of greatness and the secret key to their success.

Some are outstanding because of their faith, others their courage; still others are noted for their unselfishness, their willingness to sacrifice.

In Rebecca, it was her faith as she made her decision to leave her home and family and make that long trek across the burning desert wastes to become the bride of a man whom she had never seen. Through her action, she became the mother of Jacob, who was in the lineage of faith.

In Jochebed, the mother of Moses, we see an outstanding example of resourcefulness as she dared to defy the laws of Pharaoh.

Fashioning a little ark of bullrushes, making it waterproof so that her little boy would be safe, she placed the ark in the flags by the river's bank and set her little girl, Miriam to watch over it.

Her faith was rewarded, for soon she had her son returned to her, and she could care for him in her own home and teach him the ways of God.

How well she must have done her job, for when he was of age, he became the mighty emancipator of his people, the great lawgiver --all because a little woman had dared to do the impossible.

Another woman of the Bible is outstanding because of her courage. At a time when all Israel was oppressed by the Canaanites, a prophetess arose by the name of Deborah who dared to obey the instructions given by God to go out against the mighty hosts of Sisera in Battle.

Deborah ~~turned~~ tuned up her harp and sang the song of victory--victory won by faith and obedience to the Word of God.

We all look with admiration upon Ruth, the little Moabitish widow, who ^{so willingly} ~~gladly~~ left her home and kin to go with her mother-in-law into a land unknown to her.

She gladly assumed the support of her mother-in-law and labored unselfishly in the fields to supply their needs. The purity of her devotion and her eager acceptance of her mother-in-law's God led her to become the bride of the wealthy Boaz, and ultimately the Gentile mother of Jesus Christ.

On and on we could go--from Genesis to Revelation naming one after another--women who excelled, women who served, women who were faithful, women who were courageous, women who dared to do what was right when

all was against them.

How it thrills our hearts to read of their courage and faithfulness. It inspires us to strive to reach greater heights of achievement, to go to deeper depths with God, and to widen our paths of service.

Now With one accord we ask, "Oh, God, what can I do to achieve greatness in Thy sight? What can I do to fulfill your will for my life?"

The Christ-centered life is the only answer. If our lives are truly centered around Christ, everything we think and do will be motivated by our love for Christ.

Paul, an example of excellence in his devotion and service to Christ, said: "For Me to live is Christ."

In our lesson text, Paul gives instructions for finding God's will for our lives. "I beseech ye therefore, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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."

The perfect will of God cannot be realized without the sacrifice--the total surrender of the will to God. We need to become as clay in the hands of the potter to be molded and shaped into a vessel of honor, meet for the Master's service.

Paul said, "I die daily. We need to die to the things of this world, die to our own selfish desires, die to the opinions of others--die to all that would keep us from performing our tasks to the glory of God.

Study and preparation are important, not only for our own spiritual enrichment and growth, but also that we may be qualified to fulfill God's will for our lives. I believe that God will never ask us to perform a task that we cannot, through His help, qualify ourselves to do.

The work of the W.A. is summed up in the words of Paul: "Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor--showing forth the Spirit of Christ by putting Christianity into action.

Unity and cooperation are necessary in the work of the W.A. All cannot hold the same office or be leaders. Just as the body has many members, each of us must fill our own individual place and work together for the common cause--using our individual talents for God, finding out own place in His vineyard, doing our best for the upbuilding of His kingdom by "yielding our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Through work accomplished, through successes achieved, Paul warns that we are never to think too highly of ourselves, realizing that we can accomplish nothing without the life-giving strength and faith given to us by God.

However, this is not usually the case with women. I have found rather that women shrink from accepting jobs and avoid involvement. Many feel they are not qualified and insist that others assume places of leadership.

Did you know that it is only as you attempt new tasks that you grow and develop? When you are asked to do a job or fill an office, no matter how inadequate you feel, you should take it as an opportunity to serve Christ. As you study and pray, you will find that God will increase your ability to meet the demands.

A leading psychologist recently stated that the average person doesn't use more than 20% of his brain power. Are you using all of yours?

Every person has potential. God put it in you. The Bible refers to these abilities as talents. Many of us are like the man who buried his talent. When our talents are hidden, our potentials are not realized for the Kingdom of God.

We have recorded the story of twelve men who through the power of the Holy Spirit, released their full potential in their work for God. Nothing stopped them. Criticism, persecution, hardships were ignored. They praised God they were counted worthy to suffer for His name. They were so dynamic in their commitment that they turned the whole world upside down. Everywhere they went they brought new life, new understanding, new joy.

What would happen in the Georgia conference if each one gathered here would use their full potential for Christ? Would would happen in your local W.A.?

What keeps us from using our full potential for Christ. Are we selfish, preferring to spend our time for ourselves and our loved ones. Are we shy? Are we afraid of what others might say? Are we afraid of our own inability?

Paul, with all of his years of intensive education and training, would seem to be well qualified for the work he did. It would seem he needed no help. But he found the secret that there is only success when Christ is working in and through us to accomplish the job.

He said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me....not just some things-- all things that I need to do, I can do because Christ is my strength.

You say, "but I am so weak, I am not up to the job physically, mentally, or my abilities are so limited.

Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong, for the power of Christ rests upon me...my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Christ, himself made the statement: "Without me, ye can do nothing." But he follows with the promise: "All things are possible to Him that believeth."

Attempt the impossible for Christ. You will find yourself standing on tip-toe trying to do the job. And you'll not be alone, for Christ will work in and through you, making you adequate to meet every demand. You'll find that your abilities have grown and developed far beyond that you thought possible, and your joy will be enriched with the consciousness that you have done God's will.

What Christ needs is a vessel, fully yielded into His hands, eager and ready to do His service. He will supply the ability and the strength.

"Without Him, I can do nothing."

but: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me.?"

And we have the promise:

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."