

Have you ever felt that you could be great? Perhaps to write moving poetry, or build cities, or lead people, or govern the nation? I think that all of us have had at some time this kind of dream. It is perfectly normal! How many of you feel that you are great, or feel great about yourself? Or do you feel that you have failed in the accomplishment of your dreams?

We need to feel that we are great, right now! And we have a right to, because God loved us so much that he gave his only begotten son to die for us, as we read in John 3:16. In Romans 5:8, we read, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Certainly if we occupy this kind of place in God's heart, then we are worth something. We should feel good about it. Many of us have such terrible feelings of inadequacy; we feel unworthy because we are sinners. But we need to understand the true nature of God's grace, for it forgets that we are sinners if we are indeed trying to follow in the footsteps of Christ. We should have a good feeling about ourselves; we should be able to wake up each morning with a positive outlook on life. The reason is not because of how good we are, but because God loves us.

Is it wrong to desire greatness? The desire to be great is all right, for in Matthew 20:26 we read, 'whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.' So really we must strive for greatness! Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:24ff that we should live as if we were competing for a prize in a race, striving to be the best that we can be. But the gravest of warnings are given for those who try to exert their own authority over others, as Diotrophes did in 3 John 9-10.

To be a great servant for God, we must be creative in our search to be what God wants us to be. We may have to deviate from the traditional methods of doing things, for they are not always suited to our schedules and priorities. Being creative is simply being able to find a way to get a certain job done. We must use our minds and our talents. Why do we need this kind of approach? Because we have fallen into the rut of thinking that we can only act through certain programs to do our Christian duties. We don't look beyond these standard methods. If something isn't on the 'official list of good works', then we never get involved in it. We need desperately to break away from the old-fashioned thinking that we must be involved in a program to do the will of God.

Part of being a creative Christian is the recognition of our abilities. To help us think about this, let us remember the parable of the talents from Matthew 25:14ff. In this story, a man of means gives some of his wealth to three of his servants to see how they will handle it, and then went on a long journey. Two of the servants made very wise investments and returned to their lord more than the amount that they were given. For this the Lord was very pleased. The third servant simply took his money and hid it until the lord came back, because he was afraid. The Lord then said, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest." The 'talents' of this story, at the time of Christ, were simply weights of valuables such as gold or silver. Because of this parable they came to mean worthwhile qualities and abilities in a person. The meaning of the parable, then is that we have each been given certain abilities by God, and we will be held accountable in our use of them. God expects us to do the best that we can with them. And he knows what he has given us exactly. Our main trouble is that we are afraid to investigate these abilities, sort of like we are afraid to walk down into our cellar without the lights on.

God will only expect out of us what we are able to deliver. He will not ask of us, "Why were you not a Paul?", but will ask "Why did you not live up to yourself?" It reminds me of the time that Oral Robert's son was asked if he could fill his father's shoes. He replied, "I can only fill my own shoes. But I fill them all the way to the toes." This is what we must try to do; live up to our full potential. We can do it, too, for Jesus has the power to awaken the sleeping giant in the heart of every man. God is a God of creative power, and he will let it flow through us if we will only accept it.