

The Value of Small Things

by Walton Weaver

Zechariah asked the people of his day, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10). The people of Israel who had returned from Babylonian captivity were greatly disappointed as a result of the apparent insignificance of the temple being built under the leadership of Zerubbabel. When they compared it with the glory of the temple of Solomon, they wept with a loud voice when the foundation was laid (Ezra 3:12). At the completion of the building fifteen years later, it seemed to them to be nothing (Haggai 2:3).

This disappointment on the part of God's people during that period reminds us of the danger of overlooking the value of small things. Zechariah himself points directly to the danger by asking the question, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" A little reflection will help us see that most things that have become "great" have had small beginnings, and all great things are made up of smaller parts. We must never forget the small beginnings, or undervalue the small parts. Almost without exception the greatest contribution to the success of any endeavor is due to little things and ordinary people.

The principle, no doubt, works two ways. Small things have great power both for good and evil, Ahab, one of the most wicked characters of the Old Testament, "worshipped Baal a little" (2 Kings 10:18). This meant that Ahab was attempting to do what Jesus says no man can do — serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). He did not have to serve Baal a lot; a "little" would be sufficient to bring God's displeasure, and at the same time give us a true reading of his character. Like Ahab, many people will take a little of God, but not much. They want all the pleasures of the world, and a little of God, thinking this is sufficient. Others perhaps want all that God offers, but they also want a "little" of the world. Either way we are faced with the fact of a divided heart, and a divided heart can find no real pleasure in God, nor can God find pleasure in such a character.

Surely if one is being taught the truth of God, to be a little religious, or to have a little faith (Matthew 8:26; 14:31) is better than not to be religious or to have no faith at all. Everyone who has great faith has been brought from the point of no faith to the place of some faith and then on to the possession of great faith, as they have been brought from spiritual babes into maturity. But to reach the point of little faith and stay there due to indifference or neglect will not only make one's Christian life ineffective, but it will ultimately result in eternal ruin for the soul. So some things that are seemingly "little" are not so little after all, especially when one considers the consequences of them.

Great faith is sometimes demonstrated in the doing of great things, like Abraham offering his only son upon the altar. But we must not overlook the fact that it also takes great faith to do little, or ordinary things---things we do on a day-to-day basis just because we are Christians and love God and His son, Jesus Christ. There is real value in the little things that people do for the cause of Christ. bigness, ability, prominence, or any other

similar standard we so often use to measure greatness, are not real indicators of what constitutes greatness. All of these tend to cause us to overlook the value of small things. Big buildings, big churches, big preachers, big elders, big works, etc., seem to be what we take pride in. Whatever happened to the "little guy" who is doing most of the "little things" that must be done, and to the glory of God? For the most part, he is lost in the crowd while the rest of the folks are out trying to accomplish some "great thing."

But God sees the "little Christian" and honors him above all, for as Jesus said, "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26). That is a salute to the Little Christian (not little in faith, mind you, but simply unrecognized by the world, and not honored by the "greats" in the church), who though last in some respects, shall be first (Matthew 19:30-20:16). No person who undervalues small things can see the truth in this statement.

Jesus said "the kingdom of heaven is like a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:21). With this illustration He pictures the nature of the growth of the kingdom. It emphasizes the small to great destiny of the kingdom in the world, just like the mustard seed parable that preceded it. It may go further, and in a secondary sense, describe the intended growth of the kingdom in the individual. Whatever may be the full meaning of the parable, Jesus illustrates what we are emphasizing here, and that is the value of small things.

Leaven is also used to illustrate the evil influence of small things (I Corinthians 5:1-6; Galatians 5:9). Someone has said, "A little evil may be overlooked because it is little, but not much evil is needed to destroy the church." Every Christian has witnessed how much havoc has been wrought in churches because of a little greed, a little pride, a little jealousy, or a little malice.

The one-talent-man did not understand the value of small things (Matthew 25:14-30). Neither did Naaman, who had the Lord called on him to do some great thing, would not have questioned Him (2 Kings 5:13). But since the Lord did not do that, he hesitated to go dip in the waters of Jordan as commanded. The lesson? Do not overlook the value of small things. Even a cup of water given in the name of a disciple will be rewarded (Matthew 10:42).

Every Christian has ability, just in different ways and in different degrees, when compared with others. The amount of our ability, or the particular area it is in, is relatively insignificant. What really matters is that we use it, and thereby improve it, as the two and five talent characters did in the parable of the talents. It may be small in the beginning, but a lot of great things have had small beginnings.

Friends, do not underestimate the importance of showing a friendly disposition, speaking a word of encouragement to someone, helping a friend come to know about Jesus Christ and His teaching, mailing a card, calling someone who needs you or visiting someone in the hospital or at home. These may seem like small matters, but these and

many other seemingly unimportant matters, are worth more than we usually imagine. And what if they are small in one sense of the word? Small does not always mean unimportant, or without value. There is value and importance in small things. Have we "despised the day of small things?"