

Editorial: DOING WHAT WE CAN

Do you ever feel annoyed or frustrated because, due to the pressures, frailties and complications that factors like aging and disability bring, you cannot serve the Lord as you would like, or as you formerly did? You wish you could do so much more, and possibly feel, due to your personal circumstances, that the service you can render to God is pitifully small. Or you may ponder some eminent Bible teacher, whose ministry via preaching, teaching, books, radio, the internet etc is impacting lives in huge numbers, and feel your influence for God is so limited in comparison. Does the Bible have a word for you?

In Mark's gospel we read the story of how a woman anointed Jesus' head with precious ointment of spikenard from an alabaster box. His disciples criticised her action as wasteful, but Jesus said in response "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me ... *she hath done what she could* ... verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." (Mk 14:6-9) Jesus praised this woman for doing what she *was* able to do and, two thousand years later, this account is still being read all around the globe. God has gifted each of us differently, and placed us in vastly varying situations – and He will never criticise or judge us for failing to do things He never intended us to do – He just asks us to be faithful in *doing what we can* for Him. If – through age, disability or adverse circumstances – you feel woefully restricted in how you can serve God, let me use this editorial to suggest four things that each and every person can actually do.

1. You can **SHARE**. All four gospel accounts relate the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. But have you ever thought what would have happened if the little lad with the loaves and fishes had thought, "I'll just look after No. 1, I'm not parting with my lunch". He would have missed a mighty demonstration of Jesus' power, and countless lives would not have been blessed. Yet he placed his 'little' into the Master's hands, and Jesus made it 'much'. So what can you share? It is often said that wise men learn from their mistakes – but wiser men learn from the mistakes of others! You can share lessons you have learned on the journey of life, and insights that God has given you as you walked the Christian pathway. You can share your testimony and how God has helped you through difficult times. Such personal testimony often carries great weight to a seeking or sorrowing soul. And, if God has blessed you materially, you may be able to bless others – be it a next-door neighbour, a Bible distributor, or an organisation that is tangibly showing the love of Christ to needy souls in some other part of the world. When we so share, Scripture assures us of the smile of God upon us. "But to do good and to communicate (share fellowship or resources) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb 13:16) "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov 11:25)

2. You can **SHINE**. On many occasions I have heard a minister relating how they had gone to visit someone within their congregation classed as a "shut-in" – someone, who through age, infirmity or some other impediment, was no longer able to get out and about. The visit was planned to lift the person's spirits and to bring some biblical encouragement to them. Yet, as the minister left, he testified to his being the one who had received the greatest blessing. It can be easy – and

entirely human nature – to murmur, feel discouraged or resentful when the pressures and difficulties of life seem to surround us. But what a powerful testimony is sent out when a Christian bears their oft heavy cross with fortitude, dignity and willing acceptance of their Heavenly Father’s sovereign workings, as they prove the sufficiency of God’s grace (2 Cor 12:9).

3. You can **SOW**. I’ve recently been reminded of the true story of the praying granny of a friend within the CSCU. An unwelcome stroke had resulted in a heightened level of incapacity, yet she never contemplated any loss of usefulness in Christ’s service. From her armchair she witnessed to all who came into her home of the Saviour she so loved. There were plenty of things she couldn’t do, but she was unstintingly faithful in doing what she could – in sowing the gospel seed. Though she didn’t see it within her own lifetime, through her faithful witness and prayers, many within her family circle came to personal faith in Christ – “he (*or she*) which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” (2 Cor 9:6) Despite those limitations that grieve us, if we look for them, there can still be ways in which we can display Christ’s love and share His life-changing message. “And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal 6:9) “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:5-6)

4. You can **SUPPLICATE**. Even should you have little human contact, or are limited by a lack of energy or other resources in serving God as you might desire, there is one supremely valuable thing you can do – you can pray! Even if age, illness or disability should leave you feeling lonely or isolated, through the merits of Christ’s finished work on Calvary, you can still have an audience with the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords – anytime, anywhere. “Draw nigh to God, and he shall draw nigh to you ...” (Jam 4:8) And, despite the weakness or frailty of the human body, the believing saint who prays in faith will find their physical limitations place no barrier on God answering their prayer. “... If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” (Mark 9:23) The CSCU (NI) Committee is privileged to have in its ranks a lady in her 101st year who, though physically weak, is yet spiritually vibrant and strong, and widely regarded as a “prayer warrior”. How valuable and vital in spiritually challenging days like today that such people still exist, who faithfully and persistently pray. Heaven alone will reveal the value of these prayers. Could you be such a person too? “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man (*or woman*) availeth much.” (Jam 5:16)

Growing older can sadly bring its own burdens, problems, complications and discouragements – whilst, of course, many have borne the cross of disability from their earliest days. The outward man is perishing, yet how wonderful to remember that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor 4:17) When the going gets tough, God doesn’t go anywhere, He is right by our side. Perhaps as you read this you may still be healthy, active and fighting fit? In the light of eternal realities, are you *doing what you can* for the Lord, “while it is day”? (Jn 9:4) May we all so do, for “... them that honour me I will honour ...” (1 Sam 2:30)