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Choose to serve the Lord

When Joshua's life was coming to a close, he gathered the tribes of Israel and recalled the mercy and blessings which God had bestowed upon them. Because of the kind of life they were living, Joshua admonished them and said:

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."¹

Put away worldly gods

In our day we are being admonished in the same manner through apostles and prophets. We are to fear the Lord, serve the Lord, put away worldly gods, and choose whom we will serve.

Fearing the Lord means to be reverent and to love Him and to keep His commandments.

We show that we serve the Lord by the way in which we live the commandments received from Him, by the work we do to help establish the kingdom of God on earth, and by the way we act toward our neighbor.

Putting away worldly gods means keeping impure thoughts out of our minds, shedding all hateful feelings from our hearts, and ridding our lives of everything which may prevent the Holy Ghost from being always with us.

For some, putting away worldly gods may mean giving up a small habit. For others, it may mean giving up serious sins they are committing. For others still, it may mean forgetting sad events which happened earlier in their lives. Whatever the situation, in each one of us there is the power to change our life, the power

to transform the bad feelings we have in our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ will give us this power and will help us. All He asks from us is that we have faith in Him, follow His example, and obey His commandments.

When we love God, serve the Lord sincerely, and give up the things of this world, we become true followers of Christ.

Serving the Lord is not always easy

Many times in our lives, as it happened to the people of Israel, we stop and wonder, Was it worthwhile serving the Lord? Jesus said:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."²

Serving Christ is not in itself a way to escape the hard reality of life.

As the Bible says, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean."³

The rain, the floods, and the winds beat not only upon the house which had been built upon the sand, but also upon the other, which had been built upon the rock.

Both the person who serves the Lord and the one who disdains Him live in a world ruled by the same laws of nature.

Many are the things that come upon him who is a saint as well as upon him who is a sinner—disease, death, catastrophes, accidents, and so forth.

Neither prosperity nor poverty indicates whether a person is living a Christian life.

Physical suffering is not evidence of wickedness, nor is it punishment for sin.

The rewards of serving the Lord

What, then, are the rewards of serving the Lord?

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not promise that we will be free from tribulation. But it does strengthen our spirit so that we can accept adversity and face it when it comes.

The house founded upon a rock does not fall with strong winds or rain.

The person whose life is founded upon the gospel of Jesus Christ is able to:

- Face adversity with hope.
- Withstand offense with forgiveness.
- Face death with serenity.

The person who chooses to follow the Lord and who keeps His commandments:

- In his weaknesses, he knows where the source of his strength is.
- In his strength, he remains humble.
- In his poverty, he knows what his riches are.
- In his prosperity, he remembers his brethren with tenderness.

A person who can live this way, without fear or hate but with love, is a happy person.

The fruits obtained from serving the Lord are essentially spiritual.

Jesus taught that every tree brings forth fruit according to its species: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."⁴

Jesus promised eternal life to His followers: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."⁵

Building our lives on the rock of Christ

In this life, we are building our eternal dwelling.

Are we building upon the rock which is the gospel of Jesus Christ, or are we building upon the sand which lies in the falsehoods of this world?

Each moment we must choose whom we will serve, for we have been placed upon this earth to be proven and tested.⁶

We cannot choose to serve God and the world at the same time.⁷

If we want to follow the Lord, we should keep His commandments and follow our prophet and his teachings: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."⁸

I bear my witness that I know these principles are true. My family and I have been very blessed for following the advice of the apostles and prophets and for choosing to serve the Lord. We are guided today by a prophet of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joshua 24:14–15.
2. Matthew 7:24–27.
3. Ecclesiastes 9:2.
4. Matthew 7:18.
5. Luke 18:29–30.
6. See Abraham 3:25.
7. See Matthew 6:24.
8. Joshua 24:15.