

Working for the Lord

By Everett Hardin

Jesus said, “*I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work,*” John 9:4. If it was necessary that the Son of God work while on earth, surely we must conclude that we must work also. Jesus recognized a higher will than His Own. “*For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me,*” John 6:38. He recognized the Father’s authority over Him and was subject to it.

Jesus did not do the will of the Father as one who was unwillingly driven to the task, but He did it as if it were the greatest joy of His life. The individual today who is truly converted to the Lord will find his greatest delight in doing the things the Lord wishes done. We will not have to be driven to attend worship, we will not have to be compelled to visit the sick and to teach the Lost, but we will find joy and satisfaction in doing these things if we are truly like Jesus.

Jesus used the term “*day*” to represent our lifetime and “*night*” to represent the time after death. We should be warned that our day of work is very short, and that no works of helpfulness to others, or preparation to meet God can be done when death comes upon us. This verse also stresses the value of opportunities. Every one of us should thank the Lord daily for opportunities which each day brings. This lifetime presents us with the greatest of opportunities, and the only opportunities we will ever have to do the will of God and meet His approval in the Judgment.

Life is so short when compared with eternity that we may regard ourselves as having but a moment of time to make preparation for the greatest event in human experience. As the farmer leaves the field at the approach of night, so the worker in the Lord’s vineyard lays down his implements, folds his hands and goes to meet his reward. Many, no doubt, would like to have a little more time to do some things they have been delaying, or putting off, but no more time, not another opportunity, will be given. Those spending their time in worldly pleasure here, expecting a chance to repent and reform after death, will be disappointed.

Encouragement to Work

At the end of the inspiring chapter on the resurrection Paul said, “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,*” I Cor. 15:58. “Be firm, strong, confident in the faith, in view of the truth that ye will be raised up. Be not shaken or agitated with the strife, the temptations, and the cares of this life. Be fixed in faith, and let not the power of sin, or the sophistry of pretended philosophy, or the art of the enemy of the soul seduce you from the faith of the gospel.” (**Barnes**). The idea is to take a position in the service of God and stand firm therein.

We must be “*Always abounding in the work of the Lord.*” The word “*abound*” carries the idea of getting full and running over. Hence, our lives are to be filled with good works. The word “*always*” suggests that we are not to be of the Hot and cold, the off and on type, but we are to move along with the same diligence at all times. There is to be no slack time in our labors, but we are to be always constantly engaging in the work of the Lord.

The term, “*the work of the Lord*” is the work God wants us to do, such as spreading the gospel, helping the afflicted, doing good works, etc. Hence, we should not be so much concerned about doing the things which **we** wish to do as we are concerned about doing the things which **the Lord** wishes us to do. Many people spend a lot of time worrying about what they are going to do concerning this or that, when they should be concerned about doing the work the Lord has given

us to do.

Because we know “*our labor is not in vain in the Lord*” we will persevere in the Lord’s service. If there were no resurrection from the dead, our service to Jesus would be so much wasted effort. The Lord will not forget work which we do for Him. Though the work may be little, just the giving of a cup of cold water in His name, the Lord will not forget that work and will reward us. The works required are indispensable to the development in us of the highest degree of spiritual and moral maturity, fitting and preparing us for the “*place*” which Jesus went to “*prepare*” for us, *John 14:2*.

The Nature of Our Work

Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians, “*Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,*” *I Thess. 1:3*. This tells us something of the nature of the work of Christians. Our work should be a work of faith; that is a work that springs from faith. “*We walk by faith and not by sight,*” *2 Cor. 5:7*. Faith reaches beyond human sight. By faith we see the unseen and act accordingly.

Paul saw that the work of the Thessalonians was a “*labor of love.*” The work which we do must be done in love. They had unselfishly taken the gospel to those around them and elsewhere. Whatever work one may be involved in doing as a Christian, there is no value to the one who is doing it if it is not prompted by love. “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love,*” *Gal. 5:6*. Christ’s love for man, when realized awakens in man’s soul a desire to please Christ. “*The love of Christ constraineth us,*” *2 Cor. 5:14*.

The apostle had seen “*patience of hope*” in these brethren at Thessalonica and thanked God for us. Patience suggests the idea of steadfastness under long periods of trial. This is the patience of steadfastness which hope inspires. It is our hope of eternal life with the Lord in heaven that makes us able to endure the trials of life patiently. Hope proves to be a very strong influence in the life of a Christian. The hope of these brethren had enabled them to resist and wait. Their hope was not feeble and without staying power.

Relation of Faith and Works

James declares that faith apart from works is dead. “*Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead,*” *James 2:17*. James considers the possibility of a claim of faith and how to validate it. It is not enough for one to assert faith. There must be evidence of works to prove that assertion. Living faith is that faith which trusts enough to follow carefully whatever instructions may be given. “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man may say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him,*” *Jas. 2:14*. Dead faith is without value; only living faith avails. No man can legitimately say that he believes in Jesus Christ if he is unwilling to do the things Christ commands with regard to salvation and eternal life. “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also,*” *Jas. 2:26*.

The truth of the gospel must be translated into concrete action! Attending a worship service, listening to a sermon and giving brief attention to some important truth is of no value if a difference is not made in one’s behavior as a result. Some people have convinced themselves that the contemplation of some good thing is the same as being good. Listening to a painful truth is not a whipping that squares your account with God; it is a form of prodding to get you to change. Those Christians who are content with a hearing-but-not-doing religion are deluding themselves.

Judged by Our Works

All men will give account of their lives in the final judgment. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things he has done in his body according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad,”* 2 Cor. 5:10. In that day the wicked will be punished and the faithful in Christ will participate in His glory, 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

The judgment of Christ will result in a just reward, a recompense for what one has done in the body. God *“will render to every man according to his deeds,”* Rom. 2:6. If we have been submissive to the will of the Lord, and have worked while it is day, we will be rewarded, but if we have been negligent and rebellious, we will be condemned. Here again we are impressed with the fact that our only opportunity for pleasing the Lord is in this life. There will be no opportunity after death. *“It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment,”* Heb. 9:27. The works required of us are the very works we ought to do. It is the only right way to live, and there is no other safe way to die.