

WORKING FOR CHRIST

"We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work". John 9:4

The thought that he associates his people with His is a profound one. It is a thought that is impressive and exceedingly suggestive. No other man ever had such conceptions of certain things as Jesus had.

1. He had a clear conception of the specific work which He had to do here in time on earth. He knew what He had to do.
It was very clear that He came to do definite things.
2. He had a clear conception that these definite things He came to do must be done within a specified time; that there was no margin to throw away.

One fully prepares himself to do grand and far-reaching things only when he has clearly settled in his mind three things:-----

1. What he is to do
2. How much time he is allowed in which to do it.
3. When that time expires it is an absolute impossibility to regain one fleeting moment of it.

A man can accomplish a great thing only when:-----

1. It shapes itself before him as an imperious and incorrigible obligation.
2. It takes possession of his heart as something which:---
 - a. Must be done
 - b. Comes with a paramount claim
 - c. Dominates everything else
 - d. Excludes the consideration of everything else.
3. He has a proper conception of what night is. Night means-----
 - a. The absolute and eternal cessation of opportunity.
 - b. The absolute impossibility of being able to recall one fleeting moment in which to try over again what had passed by unimproved.
4. He has a clear conception as to whose is the work that he is to perform. Therefore, the Saviour says, "We must do the work of Him". What does this Scripture mean-----
 - a. Works which He prescribes
 - b. Works which He defines
 - c. The obligation to do them comes from Him.
 - (1) It grows out of His commands
 - (2) It grows out of His authority to impose the obligation.

There are four outstanding thoughts in this text namely,-----

- I. A SPECIFIC DUTY
- II. A BINDING OBLIGATION TO PERFORM THAT DUTY
- III. A SPECIFIC TIME IN WHICH THAT DUTY IS TO BE PERFORMED
- IV. A CERTAINTY THAT IF THAT TIME IS NOT UTILIZED, THERE WILL BE NO OTHER.

When we study the life of Christ in the light of these four thoughts His life is explained. We may read the Gospel accounts which reveal both His inner and outer life, and we will be impressed by all that

was said and written to the effect that He did not bring a vacant mind into the world. He knew--why He came, what He had to do, and when it must be done. He felt all of the imperious power of the obligation to do it. He knew that if it was not done within the few years of His public life it would never be done. In those few years of His life were compressed the whole Divine work of human redemption. Therefore, there were no off-days; no days of self-indulgence; no days in which He could withdraw His mind from the great mission upon which He came. He would not claim right to turn aside to frivolities, to lightness of speech and thought, but all the time He staggered under the weight of the obligation that rested upon Him to fill every hour full of efforts to accomplish His mission, as if His heart could entertain no other feeling, as if His mind could conceive of no other thought, as if His hands could be employed in no other work, and as if His feet could walk in no other path. Hence the seriousness of His life, the gravity of His disposition, weightiness of His words and wisdom with which He directed everything to one pre-arranged consummation. His relaxations were not like ours, but were relaxations of prayer. Often He spent whole night in prayer, as if, in struggle for accomplishment of His work, He had turned aside to gather new strength, new power, to refresh His mind in communion with God, to qualify Himself for greater exertions, to find in communion such a fulness of the Divine Spirit as would enable Him to go back and meet the contradictions of men, cavils of objectors, malice of hell, combination of enemies, and overcome the obduracy of the hearts of people He purposed to save.

I. A Specific Duty

The text associates, binds and obligates you and me to do the works of God while day is, because night cometh when no man can work. This passage goes beyond the one in Ecclesiastes which exhorts: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Since Jesus took His own share in the work and associates us with Him in it, the constituent elements of greatness in our working for Him lies in--a fixed purpose, a Divine mission, and an appreciation of the time which He gives us to perform the work which is allotted to us. Our trouble is in that we do not know what we are to do at all times, when we are to do it, and do not realize how irretrievable is a lost opportunity. Let us humbly, courageously, faithfully, and profoundly ask the question--Who sent us, why, for what and when? The Book tells us what a church has to do, its mission, its office here in the world, and it is just as clear as the work of Jesus. We have no option or election but God prescribes the work and defines its bounds. When He says what a church shall do our duty is to take it just as He said it. The specific duty is the upbuilding or growth of the individual members of the church as a means to an end and that end is the leading of other lost souls to salvation. Take out of the work of the church the leading lost souls to Jesus and you leave the church without a mission or reason for its existence. How awful when we think that the mission of our church is to lead souls to Christ and yet we allow months and years to pass away and no soul saved. Christ laid great stress on the work of saving and blessing souls. He described this work as the work of God.

II. A Binding Obligation To Perform That Duty

1. Christ felt this obligation to perform His work--"We must work" Nothing could discourage Christ and keep Him from doing His duty. All His works were the works of God. He was obliged to do what he did:-----

- (1) Not as God but,
- (2) As man
- (3) As Mediator

He was bound and compelled to do it by the cords of love.-- He loved the sons of men so well that He could not sit and see them perish. He could not sit still and be an impassive, careless, and loitering spectator of so much evil and misery.

2. As Christ's followers, this binding obligation to perform our duties is upon us and it is of such a nature that it cannot be questioned or escaped from. He associates us with Himself in His Divine enterprise of mercy. He rightly described His work and ours as the work of God. He owned His true position--an ambassador sent by the King and threw a hearty earnestness into the work He undertook. We are workers under Him and we are called upon to do God's work also. Personal obligations rest upon us--we must not lose ourselves in the crowd. Our personal obligations compels us to do just such work as Jesus did--enlighten sinners. We must do the works of Him that sent us which are:-----

- (1) Works of piety---

- (a) Loving God
- (b) Trusting on Him
- (c) Submitting to Him
- (d) Fearing Him
- (e) Rejoicing in Him

Thanking the Father for our creation; believing the Son for our Redemption; and hearkening to the Spirit for our sanctification.

- (2) Works of equity to our neighbors---

- (a) So as to wrong none
- (b) So as to help all

- (3) Works of charity to the poor---

- (a) Obedientially to God's command
- (b) Proportionally to our means

- (4) Works of sobriety

- (a) Keeping the flesh under subjection
- (b) Mortifying our sins.

The duty is our's to perform; the results are God's to give.

3. This obligation is binding in the doing of God's work--"We must work the works of Him that sent Me".

What we do we must because God has assigned it; because He will therein be glorified, His character unfolded, His purpose proclaimed and His Gospel adorned among men.

4. To fulfill this obligation and perform our duties we must have received His Spirit and accepted His will ~~will~~ as the law of our lives thus becoming fellow-workers with Him. Only through regeneration is it possible to become one of His workmen. His works, which are spiritual, can only be performed by spiritual people. If we have not repented, believed, and come under the influence of His Spirit then our works are not

the works of God and cannot be pleasing to Him for they are not done in dependence on His Spirit. Again I say, that as Spirit-filled believers our supreme mission and obligation is to lead souls to Jesus Christ.

III. A Specific Time In Which That Duty Is To Be Performed

1. We are to do these works while it is day.

(1) What is meant by day?---

- a. The time of life
- b. The time of grace
- c. The present time

Within the day of life there are days especially favorable

- a. Day of youth
- b. Day of health
- c. Day of religious opportunity
- d. Day of spiritual influence.

2. Christ's interpretation of the day

He uses the language of urgency. His mission must be fulfilled in the day of opportunity or not at all. He calls His lifetime a day to show us that He was impressed with the shortness of it. His life ended when most human lives are said to begin. For all there is but one day. Time is long enough for the work but too short to allow trifling. It is well for men to begin early. Some postpone their religion till the evening which is a dreadful risk for the night may come suddenly, and even if they find time it is a poor homage to offer God the dregs of life.

3. Another reason for performing this duty in the specific time is because of the brevity and uncertainty of life,--the day is short, task is great, workmen are sluggish, reward is much, and Master of the house is urgent. Human existence may be compared to the most fleeting things in nature--the mist which disappears before the sun, cloud driven by the winds, the shadows that flit across the landscape, the smoke that ascend and mingles with the atmosphere, the leaf of the forest tree, and the flower of the field. Man is more fragile, than many of his works--pyramids of Egypt, 4000 years. Naturalists tell us that birds fly more swiftly in Norway than elsewhere because the summer days are so short giving them such a little time to do so much. Surely, we would fly more swiftly to do our Lord's work if we would only meditate upon the fact that the day is so short and the night is so near at hand.

If we should measure our lives, not by the lapse of time but by the things we should accomplish in them, the character they should attain to, by purposes that should be bearing fruit in them, we would soon realize how short they are. The time for personal spiritual growth, development of graces, acquisition of knowledge, and contraction of good habits is brief. If you have anything to do for the poor, the church, the world's purity, and happiness, you have no time to lose, for the night cometh.

This expression, night cometh, has a double significance--it comes to us and it comes to those whom we are sent to save.

Night here means death, the ending of opportunity for living and doing, and no one can tell when it will come. The hour when we shall have to lay down our tools is coming near and the shadows are lengthening. In hayfield one works with more diligence as evening grew darker. The postponement of duty is irremediable loss and cannot be made up at another.

The time in which Christ has to do His work was limited but in it He finished His work which was--To demonstrate Himself to be what He was----

- (a) The Son of God
- (b) Sent from the Father
- (c) The true Messiah

Then we should be thankful to, believe in, love and imitate Him. Why should we do the works I have mentioned presently?--

- (1) Much time has been spent in vain.
- (2) Life is uncertain
- (3) The longer we procrastinate the harder it will be
- (4) We cannot do it in the world to come.

Most important thought in my mind is that of my responsibility to God. Most oppressive thought on my heart is that my time on earth is short and I want to lead many souls to Christ for my commission as a preacher expires with death so my only time to preach is while I live. I ask only for work till the end of my work. I have often been told that I am working too hard, but my time to work for Jesus cannot be long at the longest, and I do not want to deliberately pluck the stars out of heaven's crown and swap them for a few hours of self-indulgence. I expect to pass this way but once therefore I want to do all the good I can and help as many as possible. I wish I could do a thousand times the work for Him. Even though night does not come to me for years yet it does come to those whom I am commissioned to win to Jesus. Perhaps someone has given us an opportunity to converse with about Christ, set a worthy example before, exercise a constraining power of Christian love and while we waited, hesitated, deferred, procrastinated, etc., night came and never again will the door be opened to him. It means banishment from God, eternal night, and deprivation of all light.

Night cometh, day wanes, opportunity passes, eternity hastens.

IV. A Certainty That If That Time Is Not Utilized, There Will Be No Other.

We must cease from our labors for Jesus tells us that the night is coming. He teaches us that the time for work will expire and that there is no possibility of performing any work thereafter. There is no repenting, believing, and doing the works of charity in the grave. All need to prepare for death.--A Young prince asked his tutor to give him some instruction about preparing for death. "Plenty of time for that when you are older," was the reply. "No", said the child, "I have been to the churchyard and measured the graves, and there are many shorter than I am." If you do not prepare for your meeting with God before you lay down this life you will never have the opportunity to do so.

My last word to you is come to Jesus and lay hold on eternal life.

"WORK FOR THE NIGHT IS COMING"

Work for the night is coming,
Work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;
Work when the days grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun;
Work for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.

Work for the night is coming,
Work through the sunny noon;
Fill brightest hours with labor,
Rest comes sure and soon;
Give every flying moment,
Something to keep in store;
Work for the night is coming,
When man works no more.

Work for the night is coming,
Under the sunset skies;
While their bright tints are glowing,
Work for daylight flies;
Work till the last beam fadeth,
Fadeth to shine no more;
Work while the night is dark'ning,
When man's work is o'er.

"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

I. A Necessity to Labour -- "I must work."

He could not help himself. He was under restraint; he was compelled. The cords which bound him, however, were the cords of his deity. They were the cords of love which bound him. It was because he loved the sons of men so well that he could not sit still and see them perish. He could not come down from heaven and be an impassive, careless, loitering spectator of so much evil, so much misery.

Not only was it the love within which made the compulsion; but it was also the sorrow without which compelled him.

Do we feel as if we must work? There are so many professors who feel that they must feed! nay, they must be fed. There are some who feel as if they must always find fault with other people's work. Many must be excused working. This is not to be a Christian -- to shun work for Christ. Then who must I work? Because I am saved.

Our love is caused by Christ. His love to us makes us feel that we must work for him.

II. A Speciality of Work -- "I must work the works of him that sent me."

There are plenty of people who say, "I must work," but there are very few who say, "I must work the works of him that sent me." Many people feel the compulsion of working to get on, or working to support a family. Very proper indeed. Some work in order to get fame.

Observe the character of the work which Christ performed. It was not a work of his own devising. His works were works of pure philanthropy to men, and of entire consecration to God.

Each Christian is personally to do the work of him that sent him.

III. A Limitation of Time -- "while it is day."

IV. Remembrancer of Our Mortality -- "the night cometh."

You cannot put it off. The night cometh for the pastor, who has laboured for his flock; for the evangelist, who has preached with earnestness; for the Sabbath-school teacher, who has loved her charge; for the missionary, who has worked for souls. "The night cometh." The night cometh for the sitters in the pews; for the father, the mother, the daughter, the husband, the wife. "The night cometh." Dear hearer, shall you need to be reminded that the night cometh for you?

How dreary the conclusion! "When no man can work."

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT - 1867 - Spurgeon, p. 338

These words, as you will perceive, were spoken by our Lord just before He proceeded to heal a blind man. The time, He knew, was drawing near when His work on earth would be finished, and He wished to leave no part of it imperfect, no act which He had been sent to do undone, no deed of mercy by which He could show forth the glory of the Father and the character of His own Gospel unaccomplished.

Each man has a great work given ~~EE~~ him to do, which he is in great danger of not doing.

Finally, let us remember that not only is night coming rapidly to us, but that it is also falling rapidly on others, so as to make it impossible to work for them, even while our own day is still lasting.

May God give us grace and strength to do His holy will -- to work His blessed works -- during all the time He has allotted to us on earth. And to His name be praise and glory, now and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES - Flint - p. 264

I. Jesus felt the Divine Imperative to Work.

To the Pharisees, who challenged Jesus for healing the lame man on the Sabbath, he replied: "My Father works hitherto and I work" (John 5:17). God is the great Worker of the universe. He it is who "energizes" us to will and to work (Phil. 2:13). There was in Jesus the supreme urge to work. According to Carlyle that is the mark of genius. In Jesus it is one of the proofs of his deity. He was and is like his Father in the drive to do his Father's will.

II. We are Sharers with Jesus in the Works of God.

The correct text in John 9:4 is: "We must work the works of him that sent me." Jesus takes the disciples in with him as partners in the work of the Father. The same necessity rests upon us also, not in the same degree, but in a degree commensurate with our relation to the Father. We are co-workers with God (I Corinthians 3:9) in God's field, in God's building. That is our privilege, our honour, our duty, our glory. Too many approach church work, kingdom work of any kind, with the desire to get off with as little as possible. They forget that work is Christlike, that work is Godlike. Cooperation with God and with God's people is a needed lesson for us all. Some like to see the work of God done, but prefer that some one else do it. When Christ calls to his service he calls to work with him and for him. We are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10). That is part of God's elective plan and purpose. He has drafted us for the war with Satan and sin.

III. Pious Piddlers Have No Right to Eat.

Paul had no sympathy with the view, so common today, that the world owes every man a living. The world owes nothing of the kind, nor does God.

PASSING ON THE TORCH AND OTHER SERMONS * A. T. Robertson - p. 23