SERVING in the Lord's Work

1 Corinthians 16:5-24

3-17-2024

Introduction: In light of the fact that "*your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (I Cor. 15:58), how can you do your part in the Lord's work?

In this last chapter of I Corinthians, the Apostle Paul describes:
How to GIVE to the work of the Lord (16:1-4)
How to SERVE in the work of the Lord (16:5-24)

**** How should you SERVE in the work of the Lord?***

I. Serve by INVESTING TIME IN GOD'S PEOPLE (v.5-7)

II. Serve by SEIZING GREAT OPPORTUNITIES (v.8-9)

III. Serve by SHOWING KIND HOSPITALITY (v.10-12)

IV. Serve with STEADFAST COURAGE (v.13)

V. Serve with a SERVANT'S DEVOTION (v.15)

VI. Serve with a SUBMISSIVE ATTITUDE (v.16)

VII. Serve with an ENCOURAGING SPIRIT (v.17-20)

VIII. Serve with the MOTIVE OF LOVE (v.14, 21-24)

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VI. Serve with a _____ (v.16)

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VIII. Serve with the _____ (v.14, 21-24)

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Introduction:

Some encouragement for weary servants:

1. *Serving the Lord*…Returns the Greatest <u>Gratitude</u>

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

2. *Serving the Lord*…Fulfills Life's Greatest <u>Purpose</u>

1 Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

3. *Serving the Lord*…Meets People's Greatest <u>Needs</u>

2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
2 Cor. 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

4. *Serving the Lord*…Taps into the Greatest <u>Power</u>

Col. 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

5. *Serving the Lord*…Receives the Greatest <u>Honor</u>

John 12:26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

6. *Serving the Lord*…Pays the Greatest <u>Rewards</u>

1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

7. *Serving the Lord*…Fills the Heart with the Greatest <u>Joy</u>

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

8. *Serving the Lord*…Brings God the Utmost <u>Pleasure</u>

2 Cor. 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

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I. Serve by INVESTING TIME IN GOD'S PEOPLE (v.5-7)

V. 5

Paul established the church at Corinth during his second missionary journey. Now he promises a return visit (which did take place during his third missionary journey). he would first pass through the northern province of Macedonia and spend time with the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

V. 6

"It may be" - Paul allows for the will of God to change his plans ("Men rule, God overrules"(.

*"I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will" (*I Cor. 4:19; cp. Ja. 4:15).

"I will abide" - The Apostle determined to stay with these brethren for a while (they needed more than a quick visit). Paul purposely planned a winter visit so that he could spend more time with them during difficult travel months.

V. 7

"I will not see you now" - "I do not wish to see you now just in passing" (NASV).

Paul did not want to make a mere "passing visit." He new they needed his time and attention (in the interim he would give the Holy Spirit time to use this Epistle to work on their hearts).

"I trust to tarry a while" - Paul was not a "fly by night" evangelist. He was a man who invested time in God's people. Although he was an itinerant church planter, he did not ever abandon a people who needed him.

Some contemporary problems in ministries:

--Short-term pastorates
--Pastors who have no time for people (too busy playing golf)

The ministry is <u>people-oriented</u>.

If someone is pursuing the ministry, but does not like people, they should choose another career.

The greatest investment is an investment in the greatest thing, and there is no greater investment you can make than in God's people.

II. Serve by SEIZING GREAT OPPORTUNITIES (v.8-9)

V. 9

"A great door" - A big, wide door (an opportunity to reach many souls).

"Effectual" - Effective, active, powerful (an opportunity to see life-changing ministry take place).

"Is opened" - God does the opening of doors.

"Unto me" - God personally uses specific individuals for specific tasks at a specific time.

Hence, the need to *"be ready always*." When the Spirit moves, be ready to be used.

We must "strike while the iron is hot"; "get while the getting is good"; "make hay while the sun shines."

"Redeem the time because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16).

Ask yourself: "What opportunities is God giving me to serve Him today?"

"Many adversaries" - Whenever God is moving (doing a great work), the devil is the first to find out about it. He quickly utilizes his co-workers to oppose God's work (EX: Sanballat & Tobiah, who sought to hinder Nehemiah's work; Elymas the Sorcerer, who sought to hinder Sergius Paulus from becoming saved).

Expect confrontation. If you never experience opposition, maybe it is because you are doing nothing for God.

III. Serve by SHOWING KIND HOSPITALITY (v.10-12)

V. 10

Preacher Timothy, being timid by nature, would need encouragement from the Corinthian church.

Those who do the work of God ought to be honored for their work's sake (I Thes. 5:12-13 - *"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."*).

V. 11

Don't ***"despise him"*** - to look down upon or consider as nothing.

These carnal people, who were enamored with the big personalities, might have a tendency to belittle someone like Timothy and neglect to be as hospitable.

Remember, whatever you do for one of the least of Christ's brethren, you do for Him (Mt. 25:40).

"Conduct him forth" - Meet his needs then send him on his way fully supplied.

V. 12

Apollos did not want to come yet, perhaps because they were divided over him (1:12; 3:4). If Apollos was a carnal man, this would be great timing for him to go to Corinth. He had a cultish following. Such man-following did not excite him, however; it sickened him.

However, when he did come, they were to take care of him. We, too, need to be hospitable toward God's servants.

IV. Serve with STEADFAST COURAGE (v.13)

"Watch ye" - Be on the alert; stay awake spiritually (I Peter 5:8 - *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."*)

"Stand fast" - Stand firm; take a stand for what you believe and don't move! There is much vacillating Christianity today. Don't be blown about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

"Stand fast in the faith" - That which should anchor us is <u>not</u> our pet ideas or viewpoints, but <u>the</u> body of doctrine which has once and for all been delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

The test of a man's character can be measured by what it takes to move him.

"Quit you like men" - (a term of encouragement - cp. LXX - Josh. 1:6, 7, 9). Act like men (cp. 14:20). Don't be faint-hearted, but be courageous as a man.

Don't quit like a boy or give up like a little girl -- Be mature! Satan will try his best to get you to slacken off, become complacent or quit your ministry, but don't let him win!

"Be strong" - lit. "be strengthened" (by God).

"Be strong <u>in the Lord</u> and in the power of <u>His might</u>" (Eph. 6:10).

V. Serve with a SERVANT'S DEVOTION (v.15)

"First fruits" - The first converts, the first ones to accept the Gospel in the province of Achaia (to see "charter members" be faithful through thick and thin is a rich blessing).

To be addicted to cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs is not good. But it's good to be <u>addicted</u> to a good thing!

An addict is one who is hooked on something. He is devoted to it. What should we be devoted to?

Answer: The service to the saints. The humble waiting on God's set- apart people.

The word translated "addicted" (KJV) means that these believers viewed service to God's people as a <u>duty</u> they were joyfully committed to. No one made them serve; no one appointed them. Rather, they, of their own will, voluntarily gave themselves over to a life of enlistment in "saint service." God give us a servant's heart!

VI. Serve with a SUBMISSIVE ATTITUDE (v.16)

Stephanas and company, having received leadership authority and delegated responsibility (perhaps the ones who would deliver this Epistle to Corinth), were to be <u>submitted</u> to.

In the absence of pastoral leadership, these interim ministers were to take a leadership role and the church people were to submit to their oversight (Heb. 13:17 - *"Obey them that have the rule over you,a nd submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.")*

To serve Christ means to take your place under the authorities He has established; not be a rebellious Korah, who usurped authority. You will never be a leader, if you have trouble following.

VII. Serve with an ENCOURAGING SPIRIT (v.17-20)

V. 17

That which the Corinthians could not or would not give to meet Paul's need, these people gave. Such sacrifice was a real encouragement.

V. 18

"They refreshed my spirit" - The word "refresh" means to send relief; to cause a toiling soul to breath a sigh of relief ("Ahhhh...")

Make it your goal to be an encourager.

V. 19

"Salute you much" - To send warm, hearty greetings. Why would the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to write regarding a personal greeting? No doubt to encourage us to do the same. A greeting card, a phone call, a visit or just a quick "Hello" mean alot!

V. 20

"An holy kiss" - A set-apart kiss, not a sensual embrace. It is evident that in Paul's day, the men kissed the men and the women kissed the women as a form of greeting (EX: the Italian culture). Do you express any affection to God's people?

If Paul were writing to Western churches, he would say, "Shake hands with one another" (Wiersbe, p. 625).

VIII. Serve with the MOTIVE OF LOVE (v.14, 21-24)

V. 14

Do all you do in love.

That which should fuel and drive every word we say, every act we do, every gift we give, should be agape love.

Examine your motives. Why do you do what you do?

The driving, propelling, motivating incentive for too many of the Corinthians was not love, but a selfish desire to uplift themselves.

V. 22

"Love" = *phileo* (affection).

A curse is pronounced on anyone who does not have a heart for Jesus.

Everyone who gets saved will have *agape & phileo* love for Christ.

Note: the rhyming, transliterated words ***"Anathema, Maranatha"***

If a person loves Jesus Christ, he will also love His appearing (II Tim. 4:8). If he cannot say "Maranatha" ("Our Lord, come"), perhaps it is because he loves the world, or his flesh and not the Lord.