We Must Work

(A Labor Day Message)
(John 9:4 & Selected Scriptures)
9/4/05



Introduction:

God's Work for man produced our Salvation,

* Now we are expected to work for God.

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(Eph. 2:10)

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Introduction:

From NY to LA, from Wall Street to Main Street, work dominates the landscape of modern life.

It is said that the average man spends 40-60 % of his waking hours on the job.

However, many people are afraid to work. Just thinking about it can ruin their whole day. A bumper sticker read: "The worst day of fishing is better than the best day of work"

Do you work hard or hardly work?

Someone said: "Salt from the sweat of work preserves the soul."

God's Work for man produced our Salvation,

* Now we are expected to work for God.

I. We Must Work to <u>Fulfill God's Ordained Plan</u> for our Life on Earth
(Eph. 2:10)

The goal for the believer (v. 10) - that we should do good works because of the salvation we already possess

a. We are God's product ("workmanship")

We were not saved <u>to</u> sin but from sin (SEE: Jer. 7:10).

"We" - Paul was saved by the same means and for the same purpose as we are.

"Workmanship" - Accomplishment. This word again points to the grace of God. The saved are products of God's spiritual manufacturing.

"Created in Christ" - Salvation is as much a miracle as creation itself.

b. Our works are God's plan ("before ordained")

"Unto good works" - The purpose or goal of our salvation (in this life) is not license to sin, but liberty to serve.

"Before ordained" - God pre-planned a will for our lives (Rom. 12:2)

"Walk" in contrast to our former walk (v. 2)

A realization of God's ownership of my life will produce in me a submissive obedience to His will.

Our fruit and good works glorify God (Jn. 15:1-8)

--Works are the evidence of salvation not the means of attaining it (Ja. 2:18, 26 - "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.")

--Works are the fruit of salvation not the root of it.

--Works are the practical outworking of God's gracious inworking. Work reflect a life that is thankful and appreciative for God's grace. The truly redeemed will prove it by their works.

"By their works you shall know them"

II. We Must Work at Getting Prepared to Work

A. The School for Work Training: The Local Church (Heb.10:24)

"To provoke" - a strong word, meaning to incite (EX; of a mob); to spur on (EX: of a horse); to stimulate a response; to stir up to action; to irritate; to push someone or practically compel them into doing something.

"Provoke" - The Greek word is used in Acts 15:39 to speak of a sharp contention; in Acts 17:16 of a heart-wrenching stirring; in Eph. 6:4 of a father provoking his son.

ILLUS: How there were times when John Deseno (my bus captain) would irritate me with his concern and Saturday visits, yet it paid off! And I today thank him for loving me enough to keep after me.

I used to have the attitude: "I don't want to be a bother to them." "So what if "so and so" has missed church for one year, I'll let God convict him/her about it."

Then it dawned on me that perhaps I just might be the tool God uses to bring conviction to him/her.

The biggest disservice we could ever do toward each other is to never care enough to say: "Brother, I'm concerned about you, we've missed you at church . . . etc.

"Love and good works" do not come "naturally." We all continually rely on each other's encouragement, rebuke, and concern to demonstrate such virtues.

NOTE: The word order is not "good works and love" but "love and good works." Why? Because good works flow out of an attitude of love. Love is the motivation to good works.

"To love" - an agape love toward God and man (Mt. 22:37-39); having such love will fulfill every law! (v. 40 - cp. Rom. 13:8 ["Owe no man anything, but to love on another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law"]; and Gal. 5:14 ["For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"]).

"Good works" would include:

--Meeting the financial needs of others
--Sending a card to an ill patient
--Caring for the fatherless and widow
--Preaching the Gospel to the lost
--Forgiving your enemies; overcoming evil with good

One main reason God saved you is that you might do good works (Eph. 2:10; Mt. 5:16; cp. I Pet. 2:12).
Basically, to provoke others unto "good works" is to provoke them to Christ-likeness, because good works were the undeniable trademark of Christ's ministry.

True love may confront and love may rebuke, but true love never neglects.
--Passive Christianity is unBiblical!
--Laissez faire ("hands off") Christianity is sin!

--Being an isolationist, or spiritual hermit or monk is a violation of Heb. 10:24

B. The Text Book for Work Training: The Word of God (II Tim.3:17)

2 Tim. 3:16-17
All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17] That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

C. The Tutor for Work Training: The Holy Spirit led Pastor-Teacher (Eph.4:12)

1) The word "pastor" means: "shepherd"

2) The New Testament office of pastor is that of an overseer of God's flock (Acts 20:28), one charged with feeding (Jn. 21:17; I Pet. 5:1-3), guarding (Acts 20:28), and strengthening a specific congregation of believers.

3) The pastor must also be an effective teacher (I Tim. 3:2 - "apt to teach"); every member of the flock is dependent on the Word of God, and thus the pastor must be able to effectively minister the Word to the flock.

The Greek conjunction kai, which comes in between *"pastors and teachers*" shows that this office is one and the same. . . "pastor-teacher"

Every pastor is a teacher! (I Tim. 3:2), who must feed God's flock (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2).

(Why does God distribute gifts?)

The Pastor-teacher

1) _ Equips the Saints

2) _ To Minister to others

3) _ To Edify the Body

"For (pros) . . . for (eis) . . . for (eis . . ."

Those gifted offices were given for 1) specific purpose leading toward 2) results

"Perfecting the saints" is a significant phrase itself. It speaks of bringing believers to maturity -- not sinless perfection, but spiritual excellence (MacArthur)

"Perfecting" -

2 ideas in one word:

1)To repair (like a doctor)

a)Used of repairing broken bones
b)Used of mending broken fishing nets
c)Used of restoring an erring brother (Gal. 66:1)

2)To equip (like a coach)

To furnish (II Tim. 3:17) or outfit. To provide what is necessary for the task.

"For the work of the ministry" - for the work of serving ("diakonia")

The work of the evangelist and pastor-teacher is to get every believer involved in serving (whether in an official or unofficial capacity)

The goal of preaching is not to simply educate God's people; it's to motivate them to serve!

Preaching is to be not only doctrinal but practical.

Every Christian is saved to serve (Eph. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58; I Pet. 2:5, 9; 4:10-11)

NOTE: God's progressive plan for His church:

1)Equipping2)serving3)building

"Edifying" - (i.e. edifice) building up; growth; both spiritual and numerical growth occur when everyone is using his/her gift in a ministry.

"The Body" is built up externally through evangelism and internally through discipleship and training.

Only the Word *"is able to build you up"!* (Acts 20:32)

A Body that has parts not working is a sick one.

III. We Must Work <u>with a Sense of Urgency</u>
(John 9:4)
The "works of God" mentioned in verse 3 would be the works of Jesus in verse 4.

"I must do my Father's works while there is an opportunity to do so."

"While it is day" - while there is light (cp. V. 5)

Christ was that light, and while He ministered here His light was here (interesting that the One who is light would give light tot his man who never saw the light of day).

"While it is day" – In the ancient Middle East, they got up early (at sunrise) and worked while they had daylight.

In our lives, we have a short window of opportunity that will not be open forever.

--You don't have forever to realize God's purposes in your life.
Romans 13:11
And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

--You don't have forever to realize God's purposes for salvation
2 Cor. 6:2 – "Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation"

Come to Jesus while the Spirit is drawing you!

--The same is true of sanctification

--When it comes to rearing your children, you don't have forever!

"The night cometh, when no man can work" – A sense of <u>urgency</u> can be heard in these words.

The time to work for souls is now! The time to reach them is now!

After death night comes for the unbeliever, he enters a darkened state where he is eternally beyond reach. The time for us to reach lost souls is now. For many the night is approaching; sundown is quickly coming. Whatever you are going to do for the lost, do it now!
v. 5
The Light is . . .
1) <u>Personal</u> - **"I"** (Jesus not merely gives light; He is Light)
2) <u>Present</u> - **"am"** (The light literally visited this earth and still can be seen through believers)
3) <u>Exclusive</u> - **"the"** (there is no other)
4) <u>Expansive</u> - **"of the world"** (available to all)
As long as we are in this world, we, too, are light (Mt. 5:16). Not that our light originates with us, but we reflect the light of Christ. Is your light shining? Now is the time to let it shine!

IV. We Must Work <u>More than Last Year</u>

(I Cor.15:58)

YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT **<u>YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD!</u>**

THE LORD'S WORK IS WORTH EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY YOU PUT INTO IT!

"labor" = That which leads to exertion and results in fatigue & exhaustion.
cp. I Cor.15:15,16 "fellow laborers with Paul"
cp. I Tim. 5:17 "to labor in preaching & teaching"
cp. I Th. 1:3 "labor of love"

Paul said that he did not run in vain or <u>toil in vain</u>. Phil.2:16

"The Lord's chosen ones shall not toil in vain" (Is.65:23)

"vain" = Empty, without content, without result or profit, fruitless, ineffective.

ex. Giving a cup of cold water in Christ's name will bring with it a reward.

- Serving Christ's children is serving Christ Himself (Read Mt.25:31-46; *v.40,45.)
- Mary's anointing of Jesus with a years wages worth of perfume was not in vain.
  (Mt. 26:6-13).
  (Note: the disciples' response: "Why this waste?" and Jesus' answer)
- Israel who did not want to rebuild God's temple after the Babylonian captivity. They lived for self-interest (which proved to be vain; ex. "putting wages in bags with holes) The prophet Haggai calls on them to "consider your ways" (See Hag.1:2-8).

If you believe that your labor is not vain in the Lord you will make 3 resolutions regarding your service for Jesus Christ:

A. I WILL NOT <u>QUIT</u> in my service for Christ!

("Steadfast")

Steadfast = settled, solid, permanent stable, persistent.
An ability to withstand assault.
This word is translated "settled" (Col.1:23) and "steadfast" (I Cor.7:37) in describing
a strong determination in the heart. And the noun form is translated "ground" in I
Tim.3:15 describing the Local Church as the pillar and ground (secure protector) of
the truth.

We often use the expression to our children when they are fidgety: "Stay right where your are and don't move"; This is the idea Paul has in mind when commanding us to be steadfast, and unmovable.

BECAUSE WE SERVE A LIVING, RESURRECTED SAVIOR OUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN! THEREFORE HANG IN THERE! STICK TO IT! DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP! DON'T QUIT! "Be not weary in well doing...we shall reap..."

How does one receive the ability to remain steadfast (to have such determination?) Does it come by ones own strength? No!

When King David trusted in his own self-sufficiency he wrongly said in his prosperity "I shall never be moved" (Ps. 30:6)
He later admitted "He (God) only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Ps.62:2) Again in verse 6 he states "**I shall not be moved**". He said in Ps.13:4 that his enemies would rejoice if he was moved. (Ps.13:4)

B. I WILL NOT MOVE from my service for Christ!
("unmovable")

"unmovable" = to not change direction, or go from one place to another, to flee (Is.22:3), or to remove - ex. removing the ancient landmarks (Dt.19:14).

Today we a living in a society that thrives on change (everything needs to be new or different) The media is pumping into our minds one word - dissatisfaction (ex. with yourself "you need to buy this product to really be glamorous, masculine etc.) The grass is described as being greener on the other side of the fence, and dissatisfaction is the result - either with ones wife, job, parents, standards, etc.)

Some things do need changing. And some things must never change. You must never be distracted (even with good things) from your service to Christ.

You must lay your all on the altar and leave it there!

"The only problem with "living Sacrifices" (Rom.12:1,2) is that they keep crawling off the alter." - Dr. Joseph Aldrich

Don't detour off of the straight and narrow road to serving Christ! "Someone is reported to have asked a concert violinist in New York's Carnegie Hall how she became so skilled. She said that it was by `planned neglect'. She planned to neglect everything that was not related to her goal." - John MacArthur

One test of a man's character is determined by what it will take to move him from what he believes and practices.

When faithfulness is most difficult, it is most necessary.

C. I WILL NOT BECOME <u>COMPLACENT</u> in my service for Christ
("Always abounding")

"**Always abounding** in the work of the Lord"

To "abound" = To do more than enough. To excel, to exceed profusely, beyond measure, surplus, overflowing, to overflow the boundaries.

ex. Just as Paul was <u>exceedingly</u> zealous in the persecution of the church (Acts 26:11) and the traditions of the Law (Gal.1:14), he pursued with the same zeal the saving work of Christ in the building up and sanctification of the churches (Phil.1:9,26; I Th.3:12; 4:1,10).

The churches of Macedonia and how they overflowed in giving (II Cor.8:2,8; 9:8).

The widow in giving her last mite, gave all she possessed, while others gave out of their abundance (Lk.12:15).

We ought to give <u>more than enough</u> to Christ since He has given more than enough to us! He not only gave us eternal life - He gave us <u>abundant</u> life! (Jn.10:10).
He taught the Disciples this lesson by multiplying the loaves & fish & having much (12 Baskets life <u>over</u> (same word).

If we have ever done more for Christ than we are presently doing, then we are backslidden. We should be doing more for God this year than last year.

Another reason we ought to "abound" in our service for Christ is because it is not our work, it is the "<u>work of the Lord</u>". He is our master, our boss. Ill. of workers who while on the job look for opportunities to goof off - waste time - look for ways to just get by.

If we could ask <u>Noah:</u> "was it in vain to build the Ark?"
If we could ask <u>Moses</u>: "was it in vain to lead Israel?"
If we could ask <u>Daniel</u>: "was it in vain to stand up for God?"
If we could ask <u>Paul</u>: "was it in vain to plant over 100 churches?"
They would all respond **<u>no!</u>** It was worth every ounce of energy I invested in it!

No one will ever waste His time, energy, money etc. while involved in the work of the Lord! (Note: <u>it is His work, not ours</u>; for ex. this is not <u>my</u> church it is His- I Pet.5)
Vain pursuits in life: living for self, pleasure, fame, money, career. They will all come to a screeching halt one day! You need to invest in that which will last for eternity!

* There are no <u>regrets</u> from those who are faithful to the Lord!
Because Jesus lives, my labor is not in vain!

He is coming back! And His "reward is with Him"

Ex. the song: "I wonder if I've done my best for Jesus..."

V. We Must Work <u>with Pay-Day in View</u>
(I Cor.3:13-15)

When building a new house in New York, one will find that the codes and inspectors are strict.

"Every man's work" - In context the "every man" refers to <u>believers</u> (and <u>all</u> believers; none excluded).

Believers who attempt to build on the foundation of Christ (v. 10) and who themselves will be *"saved"* (v. 15) will have their works evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Each Christian will be judged for his <u>own</u> works (don't worry about others; concern yourself with your own; you will answer for yourself).

***"Work"* =** In context, a positive deed done for Christ. All works built on Christ's foundation will be made evident.

"Every man's <u>work</u>" - Note: it is not people (believers) who go through the fire (not RCC Purgatory), but our <u>works</u> go through the fire.

It is our <u>works</u> not our sins that will be judged. Our sins were judged at Calvary (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:1).

"Shall be made <u>manifest</u>" - to be brought out into the open so as to be seen for what it really is.

--The <u>secret</u> works will be made known (Ro. 2:16)
--The <u>motives</u> of "why" will be evident
--The <u>methods</u> of "how" will be evident

Just a <u>small box</u> full of gold, silver, and precious stones is worth more than a <u>barn</u> or <u>warehouse</u> full of wood, hay, or stubble!

Bigness (mass and bulk) does not necessarily mean goodness or precious value (cp. DeHaan).

When someone builds a house using only the cheapest of inferior materials, that house may look good at first glance, but it will:

1) Not stand the test of <u>close scrutiny</u> (an expert builder could look beneath the facade and determine its real worth)
2) Not stand the test of <u>time</u> (it will deteriorate rapidly)

"<u>The</u> day" - the article points to a day which is well known (Schlatter).

"The day shall declare it" - "The day" refers to the day of Christ's coming (1:8; cp. I Th. 5:4; Heb. 10:25). The Day of the Lord, when Jesus catches His Bride away.

When He returns, He will bring His rewards with Him (Rev. 22:12 - *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be")*.

"Revealed by fire" *(apocalupsis)* **-** Unveiled, uncovered, opened up to plain sight.

***"By fire"* -** The refining fire of Jesus Christ [Particularly His all-searching, penetrating eyes (Heb. 4:13), which are like blazing fire (Rev. 1:14), will see right through to the true value (quality) and motives of the works we did for others.]

Just as hot fire purges the dross out of gold and the alloys out of silver and the sediment out of stone, so the fire of Christ's judgment will test or try every work we did for Him.

ILLUS: of a fire sweeping through a building and consuming everything combustible except valuable metals (Morris, p. 68).

"The fire shall try" - Test so as to prove genuineness. What is a "genuine" work?

--A work performed by His power (Holy Spirit)
--A work performed by His rules (Biblical standard)
--A work performed for His glory (right motives)

All works done by Christ's power (Jn. 15:4-5) and for Christ's glory (I Cor. 10:31) will be rewarded (whether: witnessing, discipling, teaching, preaching, ushering, cleaning, translating, babysitting, building, visiting, leading . . .all forms of serving).

***"Of what sort"* =** of what kind of quality

God is not merely keeping records of what we did but how and why we did it.

--Gold, silver, precious stones =Products of a mighty supernatural creative act
--Wood, hay, stubble =Products of common natural growth and development (DeHaan)

If you are not in the Word daily, you are no doubt building with the wrong materials. If you are not in prayer daily, you are no doubt building with the wrong power!

"What sort" - Quality examination. Why do we do what we do? What is our intention? Do we have interior motives (please self), exterior motives (please others), ulterior motives (get something). . . or "superior" motives (to please God)? (SEE: II Cor. 5:9-11a).

V. 14
ILLUS: How people don't build things to last.

"Abide" - To remain or survive the revealing fires. That which still exists after going through the fire will earn a reward.

"Built <u>thereupon</u>" - Only works built on the foundation of Christ will merit reward in Heaven.

--You may be involved in a lot of social programs, relief organizations, and humanitarian societies, etc., but your efforts will <u>not</u> be rewarded by God unless they were done for God's glory and His cause!

"A reward" - A reward for each and every "work" is promised (In this life, you may not get the recognition you deserve, but remember, nothing [not even a cup of cold water - Mk. 9:41] will go unnoticed by God.

ILLUS: of a old veteran missionary couple returning to America after many years serving God on the foreign field. As they left the ship, huge crowds were cheering, reporters were crowding around, etc. The couple soon learned that Teddy Roosevelt was also leaving the same ship. The woman sighed and complained of how there was no one there to welcome or cheer for them. Her husband replied, "Don't worry, dear, our recognition and reward come later-- when we reach <u>Heaven's</u> shore."

Rewards are often spoken of as crowns:

I Cor. 9:25 - *"<u>Incorruptible</u> crown"* - for striving lawfully

II Tim. 4:8 - *"Crown of <u>righteousness</u>"* - For those who love His appearing

Ja. 1:12 - *"Crown of <u>life</u>"* - for enduring testing out of love (cp. Rev. 2:10)

I Pet. 5:4 - *"Crown of <u>glory</u>"* - for the faithful pastor

Salvation is by grace alone, but rewards are based on our works.

Entrance into Heaven is <u>not</u> determined by our works, but the metals and honors we receive in Heaven are based on our works

Note: Even our works are the result of our allowing Christ to work through us (I Cor. 15:10 - *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.";* Phil. 2:13 - *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.")*

Our chief focus ought to be on laying up <u>treasures</u> in <u>Heaven</u> (Mt. 6:19-20 - *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.")*.

V. 15

Note, it is the believer's *"work"* which is burned up and not the believer.

"He shall suffer loss" - loss of <u>reward</u> throughout eternity.

It is never a pleasant feeling to *"suffer loss."*

II John 8 - *"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."*

"But he himself shall be <u>saved</u>" - Delivered by Christ from the fire. The same fire that tested our works could have tested our souls (if our souls were not justified by God's grace).

No believer can lose his salvation, but he can lose rewards.

"Yet so as by fire" - As one who escapes through the flames without being burned.

As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego endured the fiery furnace (Dan. 3), yet had just their ropes burned, so we will endure a fire that will only burn works performed by the flesh.

"The thought here is of a person who runs through flames without being burned, but who has the smell of smoke on him -- barely escaping!" (MacArthur, p. 85).

ILLUS: the explosion and fire at Chipper's Paint Warehouse, and Vernon's escape

Conclusion:

Work Opportunities in the Ministry

Let's plan a "Work Fair" at FBC to assign work & workers.