

The Christian's Day of Labor

Text : **James 2: 14-26**

INTRODUCTION :

A. This being Labor Day weekend, I thought it appropriate to discuss the Christian's Day of labor.

1. "Labor Day differs in every essential way from the other holidays of the year in any country," said Samuel Gompers, founder and longtime president of the American Federation of Labor. "All other holidays are in a more or less degree connected with conflicts and battles of man's prowess over man, of strife and discord for greed and power, of glories achieved by one nation over another. Labor Day...is devoted to no man, living or dead, to no sect, race, or nation."
2. The originator of Labor Day is not clear. Debated.
3. The first Labor Day was held Sept. 5, 1882 in N.Y. City and is still being observed.
4. Other countries observe their Labor Day on May 1.

B. Many people try to avoid work, but God created men to work.

1. Many cultures look down on those who work with their hands.
 - a. Those influenced by Spanish culture seek to avoid working with their hands.
 - b. This value is contrary to God's will.
2. God placed His only begotten Son into a household that worked – **carpenter**.
3. God placed the very first man in the Garden of Eden **“to dress and keep it.”**
 - a. **Gen. 2: 8** ... He was assigned useful labor.
 - b. Weeds were added as a punishment, not work.
4. God Himself worked in the creation of the world. **Gen. 2:2** (**rested** 7th day)

C. Christians are **“created in Christ Jesus FOR good works ...”**

1. **Eph. 2:10**- **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**
2. **Col. 3:23**- **Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,**

TRANSITION :

Thus, with this lesson, we'll make a few observations about the work of Christians on earth.

I. The work of the Christian has remained a source of debate for the past 300 years.

A. Some erroneously say : “*No action is required upon the part of the Christian.*”

1. They say, “*To be saved one need only believe one time, and he can never be lost.*”
2. This cannot possibly be true.
 - a. The scriptures do not contradict themselves.
 - b. In many passages the scriptures require various actions :
 - 1) Paul preached that those who wanted to be saved should : “**repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.**” **Acts 26:20**
 - 2) Paul required those who wanted to be saved were commanded to confess the name of Jesus and to call on His name. **Rom. 10: 9-10**
 - 3) All who taught (Jesus, Peter, Philip, Ananias, Paul, etc.) commanded those who desired salvation to be baptized. (**Matt 28:18-20, Act 2:38, 8:34f, 22:16, Rom 6**)
 - c. In fact, Jesus describes faith as a work. ... **John 6: 29**

B. Faith without works is a misnomer ... an oxymoron ... a virtual impossibility.

1. **James 2** explains that faith which does not produce works (*actions*) is “**dead.**”
 - a. When one truly develops faith, it brings about tangible results in His life.
 - b. One can “believe” without having faith. **Faith consumes one's heart and directs it.**
 - c. The “**issues**” (actions) of one's life flow from his heart. **Prov. 4: 23, Mark 7:21**
2. **How do I know whether I have faith or just belief, ... by the effect on my life.**
 - a. Faith effects the way one thinks. (**Belief does not, e.g, demons ... Vs. 19**)
 - b. One's actions are based upon the way he thinks, upon his value system.

C. Just as earthly man was created to work, spiritual men are “**created in Christ Jesus FOR good works**” which are pre-assigned by God Himself. **Eph. 2:10**

D. Just as God called earthly Israel out of Egypt to serve Him (**Ex. 19**) He called spiritual Israel (Christians) out of darkness **so that** they can proclaim His glorious gospel to the world. **I Pet. 2: 9**

II. Why is labor required of the Christian ?

A. It is not for merit or for salvation.

1. Christians work **BECAUSE** we are saved, not in order **TO BE** saved.
2. Salvation is a free gift of God.

- a. **Rom. 6: 23**
 - b. **Eph. 2: 8-9**
 - c. By definition, a gift is accepted or rejected, but can never be earned.
3. This is the theme of the N.T. books of Romans and Galatians.
- a. No one can earn salvation. (**No man can put God in his debt.**)
 - b. One must choose which system he wants to be judged by, of works **-or-** of grace.
 - c. The two systems cannot be mixed.

B. Christians work because they have faith. (The fruit of a transformed Heart.)

- 1. Faith causes one to surrender his life to Christ. (**not just his mind**)
 - a. One who seeks to save his life, will loose it. (**Luke 9: 24-27**) Gain the world – perish.
 - b. Christians can overcome Satan, “**because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.**” **Rev. 12: 11** **By surrendering the temporary to gain the eternal.**
- 2. Spiritual growth changes one's focus and causes him to be fruitful and productive.
 - a. Before faith, one is focused on himself and his family, but learns to focus on God.
 - b. **READ ... II Pet. 1: 4-11** ... When one becomes a part of the divine nature he :
 - 1) Develops by adding Christian qualities : *morality, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, etc.*
 - 2) In doing so he secures his place in the Heavenly realm. (**at the cost of the earthly**)
 - 3) **Vs. 8** They become useful to God and fruitful.
- 3. **James 2** ... The difference between dead faith and living faith is the fruit it bears.

* **If the central focus of your life has not changed since you became a Christian, then you have not yet become a Christian. Faith changes values.**

C. Christians work, i.e., they actively serve because they love God.

- 1. Our love is a response to His love. **1 John 4:19**
 - a. He loved us so much He gave Himself as a sacrifice for us. .. **Gal 2:20 , I Tim 2:6**
 - b. This is the greatest possible demonstration of love. ... **Rom 5: 6-11**
 - c. Our sacrifice is to be a living sacrifice. ... **Rom. 12: 1** ... **Give our life each day.**
- 2. Our love for Him changes everything.
 - a. **READ and exegete ... II Cor. 5: 19-20**
 - b. The love that “**constrains**” **limits** what we do with our life. (**time, assets, etc**)
 - c. When “**the old things passed away,**” things we formerly valued are **eliminated.**

- d. The “**new things have come**” **replacing** the former life with something different.
- e. The new things include an assignment, **a job**, “**the ministry of reconciliation.**”

D. Christians work to save lost people because they are “bondservants” of the Savior.

1. Jesus redeemed us at the cost of His own life, of His blood.
 - a. **Titus 2: 11-14** ... He gave Himself as the ransom to redeem lost people.
 - b. **I Pet. 1: 17-19** ... The price paid was more valuable than money ... His blood.
 - c. To redeem is to purchase. **cf- Acts 20:28** (**The purchaser is the owner.**)
2. **I Cor. 6: 19- Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20- For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.**
 - * **Jesus did not just purchase our souls. He redeemed the whole man.**
 - a. Thus, having been purchased, the Christian belongs to God. (**body, soul & spirit**)
 - b. God's ownership of the Christian includes his physical body.
 - c. God has the right to assign physical tasks to the body He owns.
3. Christian, your body is “**NOT YOUR OWN.**” Jesus expects us to use it to serve Him.

III. What are the works God wants Christians to do ?

A. Labor is a positive thing, not a negative.

1. All Christians are expected to abstain from sin.
 - a. However, NOT doing something cannot be defined as a “work.”
 - b. **ILL-** “**What do you do for a living? I don't sell, I don't wash windows, etc.**”
2. Living within the confines of God's law is an expression of Love, not a service.
 - a. **I John 3: 4-6** (**We express our love for God by conforming our lifestyle to His.**)
 - b. Obedience is fundamental to maintaining one's relationship with Jesus. **John 14:15**

B. Love is a part of the character of a Christian. (It's the essence of God's people.)

1. We take care of each other's needs.
 - a. We take care of each other's physical needs.
 - 1) **I John 3: 15-18**
 - 2) **James 2**
 - b. We take care of each other's spiritual needs.
 - 1) **Gal. 6: 1**
 - 2) **Rom. 15: 1-2**

2. Like faith, love also changes the Christian's values ... *It changes the way we think.*
 - a. **Acts 5** ... They sold their property to help brethren in need. (**selfless**)
 - b. **Luke 14: 25f** ... Jesus demands that we put Him above everything/one, even life.

Note : **Putting Jesus first, does not imply neglecting one's own family.**

- a. Jesus condemned the custom of "corbin." **Matt. 15: 5-6**
 - b. Those who don't provide for their own are worse than unbelievers. **I Tim. 5: 8**
3. Love does not seek it's own advantage. **I Cor. 13: 5**
 - a. **Matt. 6: 19-34** ... God knows what we need and will provide.
 - 1) God requires that we trust Him to provide.
 - 2) He requires we seek HIM rather than seek after our own earthly security. **Vs. 33**
 - b. **I Tim. 6: 6-8**
 - 1) Godliness is of great benefit when accompanied by contentment.
 - 2) We are to be content if we have food and clothing. (**not if we have abundance**)

C. Titus was commanded to teach us to meet pressing needs.

Titus 3:14- **Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.**

D. The only work directly commanded by Jesus Himself was for all His disciples (i.e., all Christians) to carry the good news of salvation to all the world.

1. **Mark 16:15-16 ; Matt. 28: 18-20** .. Proclaim faith; baptize the receptive; teach them.
2. Redemption is the theme of the entire bible. **God's goal must be our goal.**
3. Jesus defined His mission as "to seek and to save that which was lost." **Luke 19:10**
The work of the Master is the work of the servant.
4. Jesus prayed for God to send forth reapers. **John 4: 35**
 - a. Paul said we are assigned to be those harvesters. .. **II Cor. 5:14-19**
(**ALL those who are reconciled are responsible for the reconciliation of others. The only way one can avoid being responsible for reconciling others is not to be reconciled themselves, i.e., to be lost eternally. SERVANTS MUST SERVE.**)
 - b. Peter commanded each of us to be ready to tell the gospel. ... **I Pet. 3: 15**
5. Peter explained that we were called out of darkness for a reason. (cf. – **Ex. 19: 4-6**)
 - a. **I Pet. 2: 9** **But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (not set on pews)**
 - b. **To** proclaim the excellencies of the one who called us. **To tell about the gospel.**
 - c. Christians have a reason for existing ... to be God's advocates on the earth.

CONCLUSION :

- A. Having been ordained by God himself, laboring with our hands is noble endeavor.**
1. It's good to recognize those who serve in earth's economy.
 2. It's even better to recognize those who serve the God who created them **FOR** Himself.
- B. There is great satisfaction in a job well done.**
1. Those who build a house can be proud of their accomplishment each time they pass it.
 2. Those who have lead others to be reconciled to God can feel joy at each assembly.
 3. Those who teach bible classes continue to feel joy as their students grow in the faith.
- C. Those who serve receive their reward after the sun sets on their day of labor.**
1. Earthly labors provide our living and sometimes a pension, but rewards end at death.
 2. Spiritual labors provide satisfaction in this life and an ETERNAL reward in Heaven.
 3. Therefore, the Apostle Paul admonishes all Christians :
 - a. **I Cor. 15: 58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.**
 - b. **Gal. 6: 9- Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.**

Current local Application :

- A. Our gospel meeting provides an excellent opportunity to serve God.**
1. Only Paul will preach, but there is something every member can do.
 2. Each one of us is responsible for taking advantage of the opportunity. **Col. 4:5**
- B. What can you do ?**
1. We can all be there with a smile, a song and a welcoming handshake.
 2. If we have a friend, we can bring that friend with us.
 3. If we have a phone, we can call people and invite them.
 4. Some can hand out flyers.

INVITATION :

Jesus died for the lost. In Him alone there is salvation. God continues to call the lost out of darkness into His marvelous light so that they can proclaim His excellencies. Where are you? **Are you among the callers, or are you being called ?**