

THE SUBJECT OF LABOUR FOR GOD

JOHN 04:31–42

Introduction

The believer is to labour for God. His life is to be focused upon the will and work of God. His purpose for being on earth is to serve God, to obey and work for Him.

- I Physical vs. spiritual concerns (vv. 31-35).
- II Labour — for the harvest is ripe, the task is urgent (v. 35).
- III Labour — for there are rewards and great benefits (vv. 36-38).
- IV Labour — for results that follow (vv. 39-42).

I. *John 04:31–35 Physical and Spiritual Concerns*

The physical concerns vs. the spiritual concerns. The disciples returned from town. They had gone to buy food (v. 8). Earlier, when they had arrived at the well on the outskirts of the city, Jesus had been tired and hungry. But now, as the disciples sat eating, they noticed Jesus made no effort to eat. He had been famished and exhausted. They were concerned, so they suggested Him to eat. Note two significant points.

1. The concern of the disciples was for physical nourishment. Their minds were not on the woman whom Jesus had just encountered, nor on her spiritual needs. They had no spiritual depth yet. Their minds were not...
 - focused on Christ and His mission of salvation
 - concentrating upon a world lost in sin and shame
 - looking for every opportunity possible to reach and help people for God

They had not yet learned the great warfare being waged between the physical and spiritual concerns of life. Their minds were on the physical: on food, on not missing a meal, on satisfying a temporary craving of the body.
 2. The concern of Christ was for spiritual food and nourishment, to do the will and work of God. Three points are significant.
 - a. The will that must concern men is *God's will*, and the work that must concern men is *God's work*, the will and work of...
 - leading people to the Living Water (Jn. 4:10).
 - helping people quench their inner thirst (Jn. 4:14).
 - bringing people to God.
 - seeking and saving the lost, even *Samaritans*: those who are looked upon with prejudice, thought to be of a lower caste, treated as the most despicable *outcasts* (Lk. 19:10).
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No greater will or work exists or can be done. God alone is God. His will and work is supreme.

=> Note the *esteem* with which Christ holds God: it is *God's will and work* that is to be done.

=> Note the *devotion* of Christ to God: God's will and work *must* be done.

b. God sent Christ. The words "sent me" are significant. Christ was not sent to do the will of men, but of God. His work was not the work of men, but of God.

Thought 1. Note two lessons.

1) The warning to all believers. *Believers* are sent by God. They are to be single-minded. They are not to allow their *goals* and *energy* to become entangled with the business and affairs of the world.

2 Tim 2:4 *No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.*

2) The mission to all believers. Believers are sent by God. They are on earth primarily to do the will and work of God, even in their secular labour in the world.

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Eph 4:28 *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

c. Christ had to finish the will and work of God. God expected it to be completed. God expected obedience, faithfulness and perseverance until His will and work was done. Note: Christ did complete God's mission (Jn. 17:4; 19:30). He now challenges His followers: "Labour for God — finish your task — complete your purpose for being on earth."

Thought 1. Note two warnings.

1) The responsibility and duty of believers. Believers are expected to finish the work that God sent them to do. Believers are not to become entangled and distracted by worldly affairs. They are to conquer wandering thoughts and desires, craving for food, complacency, sleepiness. They are not to be given over to the world and the flesh, indulgence and license, money and material possessions.

2) The accountability of believers: God *expects* believers to be faithful; so there has to be a day of accounting, a day when wages are paid out.

II. **John 04:35** *The Vision of Evangelism*

Labour, for the harvest is ripe, the task is urgent. Listen to three points.

1. The heart of Jesus was upon the harvest of souls. Men focus their hearts upon the world's harvest, the planting of seed and the reaping of grain, the investment of energy and

money, and the receiving of wages and gain. But the heart of Jesus was, and still is, upon people, upon the planting of the gospel seed and the reaping of souls for God.

2. The challenge of Jesus was, “Open your eyes, and look at the fields.” The challenge was to quit looking down upon the earth and upon the affairs of the world, but instead to open your eyes and observe the fields of people streaming across the world. The scene was probably dramatic. The Samaritans in their long flowing white robes were probably streaming across the fields by the hundreds, if not thousands. Jesus’ heart and arms reached out in a burst of compassion and intense feeling; He cried, “Look, open your eyes and look at the fields of lost souls streaming toward you. Let the things of earth grow strangely dim.”
3. The fields of souls are white *already*: they are ready for harvesting *right now*. Since Christ has come to earth, God has put His Spirit into the world and supernaturally activated...
 - a thirst for God
 - a sense of sin, a conviction of coming short
 - a deep loneliness and emptiness
 - a sense of purposelessness
 - the knowledge that Jesus Christ has come to earth claiming to be the Saviour of the world, the very Son of God

It is absolutely necessary that believers open their eyes and look now. If not, the ripe harvest of souls and bodies will...

- remain in the fields of the earth
- ripen *beyond* being tasteful and useful (be too old, too far gone)
- rot and be lost forever
- fall to the ground and decay

Thought 1. Two significant points for the believer.

- 1) We must open our eyes in order to look. We cannot see ahead or around us if we do not open our eyes to look. The things of the earth have to grow *strangely dim before* we can look and see.

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Cor 7:31 *Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.*

Gal 6:14 *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

- 2) We must look where we are so that our eyes will see the reality of what is around us. It is the harvest of souls around us that we are to look upon and focus our attention upon.

Note: we can look upon foreign fields through the challenge of others. Note another fact: the world is becoming more and more *one neighbourhood*. Distance is becoming more and more insignificant. Every believer is becoming more and more responsible for the individual in the foreign land. In fact, a man's country is foreign to everyone else in the world, no matter who he is.

Gal 6:8-9 *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Mark 4:29 *As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*

Luke 10:2 *He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

John 15:16 *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

Rom 9:3 *For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.*

Rom 10:1 *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.*

1 Cor 9:19-20, 22 *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*

James 5:20 *Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

Jude 1:23 *Snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear — hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

Psa 126:5-6 *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.

III. *John 04:36–38 Rewards and Benefits*

Labour, for there are rewards and great benefits. Christ mentioned six particular rewards and benefits.

1. The labourer will receive wages. God is going to pay the believer and pay him well. Note that the wages are already there, ready to be paid.

Mat 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Mat 25:23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”

Dan 12:3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

2. The labourer gathers fruit *for eternal life*. What he does is of supreme value. It is the greatest work imaginable. His work is lasting; it endures forever. His work actually delivers people from ever perishing, and it causes God to give them abundant and eternal life.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.

3. The labourer experiences the overflowing joy of serving God with other labourers. (note, *Joy*, Ph. 1:4.) There is no envy or conflict between the two labourers. Both labourers work and rejoice together. (How different from so many!)

Luke 15:6-7 And goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

I Th 2:19-20 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Psa 126:6 He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

4. The labourer is given the privilege of having a *specific part* in God's great work. It may be sowing; it may be reaping. It does not matter. It is God's work, and it is a *privilege for any man to have a part in it*.

Note something else. Each man has only a part. No man does it all. One man sows, and another man reaps. The task is too great for one man alone. All men are needed.

=> If the sower fails to sow, the reaper cannot reap. Some soul is not fed enough to ripen for the picking.

=> If the reaper does not reap, the soul ripened by the sower passes its usefulness: it rots and falls to the ground and decays.

1 Cor 3:6-8 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour.

5. The labourer has the privilege of being chosen and sent by Christ, the Son of God Himself.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

6. The labourer is given the privilege of serving with other great servants. Other great believers are labouring, and each servant enters into the labours of all others. (What a challenge to pray for all of God's servants and to get to the task of either sowing or reaping, whichever God has called us to do!)

1 Cor 3:9-11 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

IV. John 04:39–42 Result of Labouring for God

Labour, for results do follow. What follows gives a picture of exactly what Christ had been saying about labouring for God.

1. Many "believed in Him [Christ]" because of the woman's testimony. The seed had been sown in the woman's heart by the prophets of old and through the first five books of Scripture (see v. 12, 19-20). Jesus reaped her soul. She in turn went and bore her testimony within the town. And "many...from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony."
2. Other opportunities were given. The new believers begged Christ to stay with them. They wanted to learn more, and they had friends who needed to hear Him as well.

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name.*

3. Many more believed that Jesus was the Christ, the “Saviour of the world.”
 - a. The Christ. (See *Jesus the Messiah*, John 1:20)
 - b. The Saviour of the world. ■

MATHEW 01:21 MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST: SALVATION

The statement “He will save his people from their sins” is full of meaning. (Acts 2:37-40; Rom. 1:16)

1. The word *save* or *salvation* means to deliver (1 Cor. 1:18). It is Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who saves.
2. The words “His people” are significant. It infers that all people are not “His people.”

John 10:26–27 *But you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

3. The words “from their sins” mean that Christ saves His people from:
 - the power of sin
 - the bondage of sin
 - the guilt of sin
 - the consequences of sin (See notes, Gal. 1:4-5; 4:4-7; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25; Tit. 2:14.)

Christ is said to redeem believers “from among men [worldly men].” (Rev. 14:4). Again Christ is said to be “set apart from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26). The believer is called to separation: to live away from, above and over sin; to conquer sin; to live victoriously over sin. (See 2 Cor. 6:17-18; Rom. 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15-16.) □

JOHN 04:42 JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR

The word “Saviour” (soter) means a Deliverer, a Preserver. It has the idea of a Deliverer, a Saviour who snatches a person from some terrible disaster that leads to perishing (Jn. 3:16). (See *Salvation*, Mt. 1:21).

1. Jesus Christ is said to be the Saviour (Lk. 2:11; Jn. 4:42; Act. 5:31; 13:23; Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4; 2:13; 3:6; 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2, 18; 1 Jn. 4:14).
2. God is said to be the Saviour (Lk. 1:47; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Tit. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25). □