

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN - USEFULNESS IN THE LORD'S WORK

Colossians 3:22-24

INTRODUCTION

- A. Man has a deep need to know that what he does matters, that the expenditure of his life counts for something.
- B. We ask the perennial question, "What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?" (EC. 1:3).
- C. The Christian rejoices in the knowledge that he has been redeemed from a purposeless life to one that is purposeful. 1 PE 1:18. "Aimless" = empty, futile, useless.
- D. The Lord's work broadens the scope of man's usefulness and opens up to him a new potential for fulfillment in life.

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT IS "THE LORD'S WORK"?

- A. In one sense, all that the Christian does is the Lord's work. We must not separate life into two airtight "boxes" — religious and secular. Cf. CO 3:17.
- B. Yet, in another sense, certain things done by the Christian are specifically designated "the work of the Lord" (1 CO 15:58). Cf. 1 CO 16:10; PH 2:30.
 - 1. The Christian is a "worker" (2 TI 2:15). Cf. EP 2:10; 4:12; 2 TI 3:17.
 - 2. The Christian is a "steward" (1 PE 4:10, 11).
 - 3. Specifically, the Christian's "work" is participation in the greatest undertaking of all: the reconciliation of man to God.
 - a. For himself, he works to go to heaven — JN 6:27; HE 4:11.
 - b. But he also works to influence others in the direction of God —
 - 1 CO 9:27; 1 TI 4:16.
 - 1) By word, teaching - Acts 8:4.
 - 2) By example - MT 5:16.
 - 3) By helping, alleviating suffering, etc. — GA 6:10; JA. 1:27.
 - c. In this work, he works together with God and fellow Christians - JN 4:34-38. Cf. 1 CO 3:5-9; PH 1:3-5; 4:3; etc.
 - 4. It is the Christian's business to be "sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 TI 2:20, 21).
 - a. Among other things which perhaps could be done well, the Lord's work is chosen as the best work of all - e.g. GA 1:14; PH. 3:7.
 - b. The Christian carefully preserves his "fitness" for the Lord's work — 1 CO 6:15, 20.

II. WHY IS THE LORD'S WORK A "BENEFIT" TO BE APPRECIATED?

- A. We are "saved to serve" and the service, as well as the salvation, is a blessing.
 - 1. In the Old Testament, those who worked in the tabernacle, the Levites were a privileged class of men - NU 8:19; etc.
 - 2. In the things of the Lord, the opportunity to render even menial service is an honor. Cf. LK 15:18, 19.
 - 3. Consider Paul's attitude: "He counted me faithful, putting me into service" (1 TI 1:12 NASV). Cf. 1 CO 15:9, 10; PH 1:21-26; 1 TI 4:10.)
- B. The Lord's work is a valuable blessing for important reasons.
 - 1. Its importance. Man is a goal-oriented creature, and he instinctively seeks to "make progress" — we need to grow, develop, and find fulfillment. When we remain inactive, we rapidly deteriorate. Man's happiness requires a sense of profitability, usefulness - Acts 20:35.

2. But what is needed is significant and worthwhile usefulness. The greatness of man's satisfaction is in proportion to the importance of his goals. Frivolous triviality ruins life. "Majoring in minors" is unfulfilling.
3. What could be more "meaningful" than the Lord's work? Cf. MT 4:19. By comparison, work other than God's is less important. Cf. 2 TI 4:10. Christianity gives every person significant responsibilities - 1 CO 12:12-27.
4. Most of us will never do "great" things (in the eyes of the world), but we can do small things in a great way. Anything done for the Lord is important - MT 25:21, 23, 29. Small opportunities are often the beginnings of great achievements!
5. The Lord's work motivates the individual to rise above his circumstances - JN 16:33.
6. The Christian has a satisfying answer to the question: How important is that for which I am using myself? Cf. MK 8:36; RO 6:21-23.
 - a. Its permanence. How enduring is the object of my labors? Cf. MT 6:19-21; JN 6:27; HE 10:34.
 - b. What lasting legacy will I leave to those who follow me? Cf. HE 11:4; RE 14:13.
 - c. Its joy. Cf. PH 4:1; 1 TH 2:19, 20; 3 Jn. 4.
- C. The Christian's dedication to God and involvement in His work give a new importance even to "ordinary" activities - CO 3:17.
 1. The Christian does all "as to the Lord" (EP 6:5-8; CO 3:22-24).
 2. This life's activities become significant when seen as means to a more important end.

CONCLUSION

- A. Without God, man's pursuits are relatively empty and ultimately unsatisfying. EC 2:11; PS 127:1.
- B. Effort expended in the Lord's work, however, is not empty: 1 CO 15:58.
- C. The work done for God by the Christian is not only important and fulfilling, it is urgent. GA 6:19; JN 9:4.
- D. It would be tragic for a Christian to miss the joy of working for God.
- E. Every Christian needs to do three things:
 1. Focus his energies - LK 10:41, 42. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.
 2. Fortify his effort - GA 6:9.
 3. Fulfill his service - CO 4:17.
- F. In doing these things, we will discover joy!
- G. "It is glory here, joy beyond compare, in the service of my king" (T. S. Teddlie).