

THE SOWER
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FOR PRODUCTIVE LIVES: LABOR

God created man to be productive. Even before the “fall,” Adam was given the responsibility of tending the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15), with Eve as his helper (v. 18). After man sinned, his labors were intensified (vs. 17-19). Being without modern labor-saving devices, Adam had to rely upon his own ingenuity, God-given skills and hard effort. While mankind has progressed technology to lessen the burdens, the mandate has not been lifted. Adam was no “couch potato,” nor is it God’s will that any person of sufficient health and opportunity should shirk the responsibility of honest productive labor. It may not always be physically strenuous labor, but productive labor nevertheless. A part of Christian character is to endeavor to be productive in the care, not only of one’s self, but also one’s family. So serious is this responsibility, that the apostle Paul declared plainly, “If any man provide not for his own, and especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). The man who would purposely seek a lethargic lifestyle will certainly lose self-respect, the respect of others, and, most tragically, the respect of God. While it is obvious that those unfortunates who, because of various handicaps, are unable to care for themselves and their families, are incapable of productivity, those who, with good health, class themselves as being worthy of “entitlements” are cursing themselves and all of society. Paul encountered this attitude among the Thessalonian Christians, as some, possibly expecting the soon-return of Christ, sought to live off the brethren without laboring. Of such, he wrote, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10), then urging that such “work, and eat their own bread” (v. 12). The word of God gives no slack for those who are slothful.

It is not surprising that God expects His children to also labor fervently in the spiritual realm, as well as the physical. Jesus, in instructing His disciples, frequently compared service to Him in parables depicting laborers. We are to be laborers in the vineyard of the Lord (Matthew 20:1 f.f.). As farmers on the Lord’s farm, we are expected to put

our hand to the plow, and not look back (Luke 9:52). Upon the Lord's return, we will give an accounting for our labors, and sadly, some will hear Him say, "Cast the wicked and unprofitable servant into outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30). Referring to the Hebrew Christians' "labor of love" and their ministry to the saints (believers), the writer of Hebrews urges "diligence", then admonishing, "that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:10-12). While there is no merit wherein we gain salvation through our good works, a genuine faith will be a faith that serves the Lord to the extent of one's ability and opportunity. If we were to be perfect in our works, we would still have to admit ourselves to be "unprofitable servants," inasmuch as we have simply "done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). There will be no point in this life when we can say, "I've done enough." The Lord has no "retirement plan" for us in this life.. It is only when, after a lifetime of service, we "die in the Lord" that the faithful will at the close of day "rest from their labors," with the assurance that the believers "works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). May we, therefore, be admonished by Paul: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" *1 Corinthians 15:58)

Ron.

HAPPY LABOR DAY!

GIVE GOD THE GLORY

"For I was ashamed to request from him troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, 'The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him; His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him'." --Ezra 8:22

Ezra faced a thousand mile journey leading the people back to Israel. Many obstacles would be faced on the trip. He had a king who was ready, willing and able to help them, but first he would ask God to keep His promises. He went to God first. God opened the doors and paved the way and got the glory. When we walk in the will of God, He promises to open the doors and pave the way for us too. We should be ashamed to ask the world and the government to bail us out before we have asked God. Can we trust in Him, or will we be ashamed? Let's give Him the glory.

-David Grubb

THE LABOR OF PRAYER

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

My life has been bathed in prayer, protected by prayer, and guided by prayer. Blind English preacher William Walford wrote of what may be the consummate hymn about prayer:

“Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer. Prayer is not for the faint of heart: it is hard work! A Scottish author and theologian Oswald Chambers wrote:

“We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there’s nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do!”

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,

That calls me from a world of care,

And bids me at my Father’s throne

Make all my wants and wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief,

My soul has often found relief,

And oft escaped the tempter’s snare,

By thy return, sweet hour prayer!

--Mike Evans, Jerusalem

“**NO TURNING BACK**” will be today’s message, with Luke 9:57-62 as the reading.

PRAYER CONCERNS: I have been diagnosed as having Afib, a condition in which the heart is out of rhythm. I am to soon be having a heart monitor for 30 days, after which it will be determined if I qualify for a pace-maker. I am to have an ultrasound of my heart on the 14th. *** Continue to remember: Ruby Bradd (Clinton; recovering from cancer treatments); Wayne Polk (Shelbyville minister; health problems); Doris (mobility problem). Pray for our country that we will look to God with thankful hearts for the host of blessings which He has poured upon a “Christian nation, and praying for His deliverance from those that would undermine the principles that have been favorable to peace, liberty and the favor of God.