



Title: Controlling Desires

Theme: Beware of Becoming a Controlling Laborer

Series: Laboring Together With God

“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.”⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 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.” (1 Corinthians 3:6-11)

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A God-loving, Word-filled disciple-maker will be more concerned about his spiritual heart than about any unpleasant circumstance that he may be in. He will welcome everything in his life that will enable him to grow in Christ, whether in success in ministry or trials or chastisements. Ministry to the Lord is doing whatever He has called and gifted you to do. You fit in one of these categories in regards to being a laborer, 1.) An Undisciplined Laborer. 2.) An Controlling Laborer or 3.) A Trusting Laborer.

All true churches are made up of Christians who want to see the hand of God working first in their lives, so they can be made usable to Him. Second, they want to be empowered by the Holy Spirit so they can fulfill their part in the “Great Commission.”

There are great men and women of God who have learned the joy of allowing God to examine their hearts during the first season of their ministry for the coming year. For example, many great preachers and teachers of God’s word will spend most of the first month of the calendar year, January, inviting the Lord to do a work in their heart, before asking for direction for the rest of the year. They have the heart of the psalmist who wrote, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

They know the truth the apostle Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 3:6-10, "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 labor. 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." (1 Corinthians 3:6-10)

"And each will be rewarded according to his own labor" and growth only comes from God.

Every child of God knows that his labors for the Lord must be done in a manner worthy of the gospel they preach. If they are lazy they will see the results that sluggard gets. If ministry it is done with a mean spirit, it will only set up huge stumbling blocks in the paths of those they hope to make disciples of. Christians can fulfill their responsibilities in teaching and proclaiming the Word of God, but that does not mean that they are disciple makers lead by the Holy Spirit.

There are those who become "Controlling Laborers," They do just as much harm to the work of the Lord as the "Undisciplined Laborer." Thus, the church that is going to be pleasing to the Lord and a blessing to the body of Christ will examine the Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse her own heart before she tries to deal with the fault of others.

I would propose to you that the condition of the sluggard and the controlling laborer is always destructive. From these the church needs to be rescued by the reproofs of God's Word. It must be understood that what is in the heart of the sluggard is also in the heart of the controlling laborer, pleasing self.

Just what are the early signs of becoming a controlling laborer?

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Since self is so destructive, both the sluggard, I spoke on last week and the controlling laborer need to face the truth about themselves and then surrender their hearts and lives over to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Just as there are character traits and consequences to being a sluggard, there are character traits of the controlling laborer. His self-centered life births forth negative consequences as well.

Before we get into the character traits and consequences of a controlling laborer today in the church, home and work place, let's take the advice of God's Word. There is a principle set forth in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit wants us to obey so we can see how God deals with sin, even among His chosen people. The apostle Paul writes, *"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."* (1 Corinthians 10:11) What Paul is warning about is not to become smug or arrogant in our stand for Christ or on Godly things. Keep alert lest we fall. (The Expositors Bible Commentary)

Whether Christians have the heart of King Saul or King David, they can become a controlling laborer and become displeasing to the Lord. They can easily find themselves resting on their abilities to achieve and forget to stay in tune with the Lord and no longer truly trust in Him.

Consider with me some controlling actions of King Saul. In doing this we must understand King Saul's position with the Lord. 1 Samuel 10:1 says, "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over His inheritance?" (1 Samuel 10:1)

The story of Saul is a tragic one, yet one filled with important spiritual lessons. Young Saul was an attractive personality. But under the pressures of leadership he showed fatal flaws. Saul's story is designed not to frighten us, as if we were like him. It is in Scripture to encourage us, for unlike Saul, Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit who is able help them to maintain a trust in God which enables them to triumph where he failed. (The Teacher's Commentary)

The Prophet Samuel says, "the LORD anointed you leader..." It was by God's hand that Saul would become king therefore, Saul must govern by God's will and instructions and be totally dependent upon the Lord. It was Saul's responsibility to learn and order the affairs of God's people aright and live as one who would give an accounting to God. (Matthew Henry Commentary; The New Bible Commentary) Saul represented the authority and power of God. (The Pulpit Commentary)

The anointing was to symbolize that God was marking Saul, setting him apart for His special purpose and entering into a covenant relationship. This relationship rested upon obedience to and a life expressing a trust in the Lord. (Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary)

Samuel was careful to inform Saul that his anointing was from the Lord. This is a word of encouragement and a strong reminder to all Christians who hold a place of leadership. This refers to leadership in the home, work or at church. Those who are Christians and who are hungry for God, seeking God and working to achieve God's will may enjoy what Samuel told Saul, "...do whatever your hands find to do, for God is with you." (1 Samuel 10:7)

Saul enjoyed the blessings of God, won battles, had valiant men whose hearts God had touched accompanying him and had public support. (1 Samuel 10:26; 11) He had a son who was able to win wars and deliver the people of God from their enemies. (1 Samuel 14) Saul also knew the joy of having God get His heart ready for the task at hand 1 Samuel 10:9 says, "...God changed Saul's heart..." (1 Samuel 10:9)

In 1 Samuel 9:21 we read that Saul could not understand how the people of Israel could ever put trust in Him as a leader (1 Samuel 9:21) for he considered himself small in his own eyes (1 Samuel 15:17) because he was from the tribe of Benjamin the smallest tribe of Israel. (1 Samuel 9:21) God knew Saul needed another heart, one changed for that of farming and livestock to that of a statesman, a general and a king. (The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary)

That which probably gave Saul the greatest satisfaction was that God gave him immediately another heart. A new fire was kindled in his heart causing his mind to begin thinking about dealing with Israel's enemies, making laws, administering justice, and providing safety. He rose to a pit of boldness and bravery.

Whom God calls to any service He will make fit for it by giving them the heart hungry to accomplish His will. He will advance them into another station under His authority giving them the power of the Holy Spirit power to serve Him. Many a born again Christian who is a hungry for God as Saul was at that time of his life, expresses a life of the sanctifying power of the Gospel.

David said that he would not raise his hand against God's anointed when he was being pursued by Saul in the "Desert of En Gedi." (1 Samuel 24:4) Even then it was clear that God's promises to David were being fulfilled for his men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when He said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" (1 Samuel 24: 3-7; The Pulpit Commentary; Barnes Notes;)

In 1 Samuel 24 there is a brief argument between David and his men. Both believe that God had arranged matters so that Saul was at their mercy. They were both right in believing that Saul was David's enemy and deserved death. There were two choices. One would be allowed by God the other more pleasing. The opinion of David's men was to take control of the situation which was to do away with the constant pursuing of Saul and his men. David's suggestion was no, leave Saul in God's hands and let Him be in total control for it was God who raised up Saul as king. He would take Saul down from kingship in His time and way. (Daily Bible Study)

In 1 Samuel 13 we read of what happens to a man who wants to be a controlling laborer. The heart of a controlling laborer is really someone who does not have faith in God. He is fully able to understand God's will, but wants to take control because it satisfies self.

1 Samuel 13:7-14 tells what a controlling person Saul was and the results that come from that type of heart. “He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. So he said, ‘Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.’ And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. ‘What have you done?’ asked Samuel. Saul replied, ‘When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’S favor. So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.’ ‘You acted foolishly,’ Samuel said. ‘You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’S command.’” (1 Samuel 13:7a-14)

We have just read about the first of the three foolish acts of King Saul. In 1 Samuel 15 we read how Saul disobeys God instructions about not keeping any of the spoils of war. It is in 1 Samuel 14 we read of Saul putting the nation under a foolish oath all because of his wanting to feed self and take control of life’s circumstances rather than seek and listen to the Lord when He does give instructions.

Saul’s offence may seem trivial to us, but a basic question was involved: would the new king be subject to the prophet or would he overrule him? The prophet spoke and acted on God’s behalf, so Saul had proved by one foolish deed that he did not consider himself bound by God’s instructions. The Prophet Samuel made it very clear to Saul who was to make the sacrifice and that Saul was to wait for more instructions that were to come from him. (1 Samuel 10:8) The fact is that Saul had not obeyed divine instructions and obedience is always better than sacrifice. (1 Samuel 15:22)

The question the Holy Spirit has for us today is, “How often have we taken control and justified taking matters into our own hands?” We know God’s instructions, but our way of drawing near to God, seeking His direction is outside of seeking through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and through written Word.

Samuel told Saul that he had acted foolishly (*saka*). This does not indicate a lack of intelligence, but a lack of moral and spiritual insight. It is only through an ongoing heartfelt relationship with Christ that we can live a life free from the foolishness that is bound up in the heart of everyone. Every child of God has the potential of taking control of their own lives and forget to consider to seek the Lord or carry out His instructions. The same spirit that arose in Saul and in the men who were with David when God handed Saul over into David’s hands to do as he wished could rise up in any one of us in a moment.

Without us taking the time to learn the early warning signs of becoming a controlling laborer, we can find ourselves defeated by that which we dread

Without us taking the time to learn the early warning signs of becoming a controlling laborer, we can find ourselves defeated by that which we dread. There is a fleshly draw that causes us to justify being a controlling laborer. There are character traits that mark a person who could succumb to being a “lording over” leader or cause people to withdraw from what God has called them to do. The controlling type personality is found in the home, the work place and even the church.

This controlling type of person is not like the sluggard we took a Biblical look at last week. This type of laborer knows very well the benefits of keeping God’s law of plowing, planting, watering, weeding and harvesting when he should. He knows the more diligent he is the greater the outcome he will receive.

The controlling laborer, like Saul, will even ask God for help to understand how to do his work in the home, work place and in the church. This person will even ask God for intervention, to bring blessings on his home, in the work place and in the church. His goals are results and in most cases he gets results. The rent is always paid or the house gets paid off. There seems to be a certain amount of order in the home for the most part. He gets raises and moves up in authority in the labor force. He even has a place of leadership in the Church.

These controlling laborers become so successful, like Saul, they become young men, a head taller than any of the others. These workers become so impressive that others seek them out for advice and these types of workers quickly gravitate to other people who are diligent workers and who are as serious as they are. They will separate themselves from those who are tempted by slothfulness. They are regularly looking for ways of not encouraging those who easily fall into the sin slothfulness.

These laborers need to be looking to the Lord constantly for rebuke as Saul needed to be rebuked by Samuel, because they are always seeking to accomplish things by trusting in what they know and not waiting for direction from God. They have tendencies of following most of what they are told, but in the last moment, will do what satisfies them, and try to make things happen by their efforts.

Often when these diligent, over lording laborers begin to pool together, their heart becomes condemning of those who are not diligent or may become overrun with slothfulness. They become prideful critical thinkers and are always running others down to build themselves up.

They are always running down the way someone raises their kids, someone's home life. They say and think things like, "I can't believe anyone would do their work like that or do the Lord's ministry like that. What is wrong with them? All they need to do is quit being so lazy and just get to it and get out and learn something.

These laborers work from sun up and sun down to make sure that they have done everything they can to get results. The problem is his flesh-driven desire comes from a fear of losing control.

Just as there are character traits to a controlling laborer, there are early warning signs as well

Just as there are character traits to a controlling laborer, there are early warning signs as well. Just as Saul showed all the signs of wanting to be in control from early on in his calling, there are signs that warn us that we are becoming a controlling laborer.

The fleshy, self pleasing heart of a controlling laborer is seen in the great depression or anger that comes out when one has done his best, but did not get the results he thought should be. He does not enjoy that fact that the Lord made a way for him to get his work done and seeing the Lord raise up workers to help him in his God given task. This is because he forgets it is the Lord's work and He brings forth the growth that He wants.

Laborers who are controlling workers get mad at God and become critical and despising of God's other anointed servants. Like Saul, they become threatening and want to kill God's newly anointed when they see God working through others. They butcher by tongue and actions and find pleasure in enticing others to join in with them. Instead of being happy that God's work is getting done, they quit what God called them to do and they seclude themselves from others and make up spiritually sounding reasons for doing it.

They become snobbish and haughty in success the Lord has given them and they grow in their lust for more control. Their lives are characterized by one word, "intense." These people are very hard to work for and they make lives intense for those who work around them. At times they cannot even find pleasure being around themselves and they make their own work burdensome because of their own high set standards, all because they forget it is God who brings growth. Ministry relationship never last long with these types of workers. There is a constant changing of who they work with.

The controlling laborer will sooner or later experience physical problems such as stomach problems, digestive problems, tension headaches and sleeping disorders because his mind can never find rest.

Like Saul, who in the very beginning of his God ordained call could not leave things totally in God's hands and fully obey the instruction of the Lord, the controlling laborer just can't surrender completely his God anointed tasks over to the Lord for the end results. He just has to make that last minute change to satisfy self. It is the result of not being able to have faith in God and satisfaction of what He is doing.

There is a fact of life that Christians must face. They are sinners saved by grace. It is God's grace that he confronts sin and then gives them the opportunity to examine themselves and see if they are walking in the faith.

When confronted with his sin the controlling laborer takes to heart the only thing that can put and keep him on the right track. The words of Jesus come to his mind, "Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22:25-27)

The Christian who easily becomes a controlling laborer will make sure that he keeps himself in a servant positions.

Being a Christian who can be a controlling laborer, the Lord often calls me to serve ministries that I would rather not serve, ministries that often fall into the sin of slothfulness. There are times throughout the calendar year the Lord has called me help slothful laborers to help them promote the events that they put together, and there are times I do not even get to go to the event. But, the Holy Spirit has given such a joy and peace when I exercise my gift to help them and they saw the Lord bring forth a growth and success in what they were called to do.

One event in particular was our last "Thanksgiving Ministerial Alliance" community service. Someone else put it all together and I battled a critical heart because of the way it was being done. As I listened to the Holy Spirit, He revealed to me that although there were Biblical reasons why I could not find peace about it, there was a theme that was pleasing to God. They were raising money to help the needy and that deserved my full attention. I focused on that theme and helped with all I knew how and the Lord brought forth a harvest of people to attend, finances and most of all the joy of knowing that I can get victory over a critical attitude, do what the Lord told me to do and leave the results in His hands. It is always good to sense the pleasure of the Lord when I do right.

By "Servanthood," Christians can defeat all the sins that come with wanting to be a "Controlling Laborer." Let us Pray!!!