



Title: Trusted Servants
Theme: Hallmarks of a Trusting Servant
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)

Just what is the hallmark of the trusting laborer

There is a swinging pendulum of reactions in the church of Jesus Christ in regard to the attitude of her laborers. When one sees the results of the child of God who is a sluggard they have a tendency to give up in their service to the Lord or they start to become like the controlling laborer. They become over disciplined and lay down guidelines too strict for themselves and they expect everyone else to follow them.

I would propose to you that the best way to be a servant to the Lord is by being a “Trusting laborer.”

Just what is the hallmark of the trusting laborer?

Three weeks ago we took a Biblical look at what the Bible says about the sluggard in a message entitled “What God Won’t Bless.” Two weeks ago we took a look at what can happen to God’s anointed when he refuses to surrender to and obey the instructions of God, thus becoming a “Controlling Laborer.” Today we will look at that the laborer that is a blessing to God and the Body of Christ.

The hallmark of the trusting laborer is the Holy Spirit fruit that is evident in his life, no matter what the harvest is that the Lord brings forth from his efforts.

He rejoices in the Lord’s work whether he is speaking to thousands or tens. He works equally hard in the work place whether he has been promoted to manager or cleans the toilets. He stays faithful to the family whether all his kids obey his instructions or live in rebellion. He sacrificially loves and serves his wife whether she is respectful to him or not, in good health or bad.

The trusting laborer is like Habakkuk who wrote, “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.” (Habakkuk 3:17-18) The Holy Spirit so wants you to understand, the “Trusting Laborer” finds his joy in the Lord not in the results of his work. Results are God’s business.

The trusting laborer keeps God’s Word and fully understands the benefits of being diligent. However, he is not diligent because it gets results. He wishes to honor God, Christ and walk in step with the Holy Spirit. The trusting laborer realizes the results of his labor are entirely up to God, the Lord of the harvest.

He is driven by a desire to please God in all things and 1 Corinthians 10:31 is evident in all he does, “So whether [he eats] or [drinks] or whatever [he does], [is done] for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

This trusting laborer is diligent, disciplined and labors to exhaustion. The Apostle Paul wrote, “I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep...” (2 Corinthians 11:27) The Kings James Bible says, “In weariness...” the Apostle Paul did his ministerial labors. (Matthew Henry Commentary; Barnes Notes; The Bible Exposition Commentary; The Pulpit Commentary)

Today’s key text says each worker will be “rewarded according to his own labor.” (1 Corinthians 3:8) and the Bible gives diligent Christians this exhortation, “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58)

In three different Bible verses I mentioned the word “labor” (kopos) meaning wearisome efforts. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Vines) The practical application is, “That good ministers labor and labor, work and work to the point of fatigue and exhaustion; to the point that he can go no further. He exerts every ounce of energy and effort in his body for the sake of God and Christ and trusting in the strength of and leading of the Holy Spirit. He continues to minister the Word even when men ridicule, revile, mock, curse, and persecute him.” (Practical Word Studies in the New Testament)

Why? Because of his love for Jesus he will do all he can to present a message of truth and live out truth for the sake of Christ and the church.

In the work place the trusting laborer works as if Jesus was standing right there with him. The Bible says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...” (Colossians 3:23) This means that whatever God has given you to do, your responsibility is to give dignity to all of your work. (The Expositors Bible Commentary)

The trustful laborer does his work with diligence, not idly and slothfully. He does his work cheerfully, not discontented at the providence of God which put the child of God in that work relationship. Every job, career opportunity or position held is to be considered as duty to God when the work is being done faithfully in duty to men.

Many Christians have learned the joy of working for the Lord and have gotten victory over the attitude of hate for their job which caused unrest in the mind and heart, destroying joy in the ministry, work place and home.

I know of a man who once worked in a place that he began to hate and wanted to quit but he had a family to provide for. He wasn't good at what he did and there was no hope of a future in that place. He was a Christian and he knew that if things were going to work out for him, his family and that work place, he needed some truth to cling to.

The Holy Spirit reminded him of what the Bible says about our attitude in all of our work. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men..." (Colossians 3:23) As he surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit, he was given immediately a new heart for his work. He had no real knowledge or skills that would give him a place of authority or status, however, he could pick up trash, sweep floors and do work that no else would do. He worked hard all that day, with a new heart right before the Lord and by the end of the day he was called into the office and given a raise.

When you do all your work for Jesus, He will never let you down. Somehow and in some way He will see that you get blessed, whether you be a janitor or overseer. The trusting laborer is a worker who says, "This is just another day to show thanks to the Lord by the way I do my work."

The trusted laborer prays throughout the day, "Lord help me do my job, help me to learn all I need to know, guide me by your Spirit and enable me to be sensitive to Your urgings and leading." The Lord literally wants you to invite Him into every part of your life and work. Many a child of God has enjoyed the blessing of spending the work day praying and surrendering to the Holy Spirit's guidance and trusting in God's intervention through his entire day.

The Lord wants to be in every part of your life, and He blesses all who will apply the truth of doing all their work as if doing it unto the Lord.

A trusting laborer gives God what He deserves, undivided trust and devotion

A trusting laborer gives God what He deserves, undivided trust and devotion. He wants to hear and study the Word of God and he delights in all that God teaches him. He does not do it because he wants to gain favor but He wants to have more of Christ in his life, to know how to please God and to get the Lord's work done.

He is like the Psalmist who wrote, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:2) "With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word." (Psalm 119:13-16)

The trusting laborer digs into God's Word for counsel and direction. He is able to minister the Word of God to those who are seeking truth. He is able to discern truth from error and not twist Scripture to meet his own wants and desires. True Christ-centered desires are placed in the heart of a trusting laborer by God Himself. (Psalm 37:4)

Instead of being overcome by the cancer of traditionalism, denominationalism, legalism and faddism, this laborer finds spiritual direction, knows his call, and prays through to a healthy completion what God moves him to do. He teaches the Word of God by correctly handling and proclaiming God's truths. (2 Timothy 2:15) He is able to protect himself from and warn others about false teachings. (Acts 20:29-31) He knows the promises of God to His obedient people and he is able to share them with others.

In the church, work place and home he considers everything he hears, thinks and does to the Word of God. I was very happy with Josiah this last Halloween season. He had a friend invite him to do something that could cause people to question his position in Christ and bring compromise to what people are created to do which is glorify God. We looked at the Scriptures and the tradition of the Halloween season and looked at their own pictures and advertising material. Using their own words and comparing it to the Word of God, he was able to discern what would be pleasing to God and he enjoyed dying to self and a world view to please the Lord.

Just this last Christmas season, I was able to meet with Caleb, Josiah and Jared. We looked at what God's Words says about the believer's responsibility in encouraging each other and they chose to come down on a Wednesday night to be a blessing to the older saints and help take down Christmas greenery. All three, Caleb, Josiah and Jared had other plans for that Wednesday night. Thinking Biblically made them servants. They went outside their norm to be a blessing to the senior saints and in the end pleased the Lord as well by becoming trusting laborers.

Trusting laborers are so full of God's Word and spend so much time meditating upon it that they are able to crush the world view. They present a Christian view to those they speak to, put a stop to the worldliness that so often is working its way into the church. Meditation upon the Word of God and speaking its truths in love enables Christians to live expressing sacrifice in the work place and home.

Years ago some workers were being laid off of a government organization work force. Some of those being let go threatened to sue, stating that they had longevity over some of the younger workers who were in other departments. One was a Christian, saying he would not be part of such a lawsuit, for it would cause others to lose their jobs. He said, "he would just trust in God." He sacrificed a legal argument, sacrificing his longevity for the sake of others.

Over the next few months, the government organizations needed to hire back some workers. The Christian was the only one hired back of the group that was let go. He was hired back receiving his old wages, with better benefits and was placed right back in his original position of longevity. Trusting laborers who make a testimony for God see the Lord do some amazing things.

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Hebrews 10:38 says, "But my righteous one will live by faith..." (Hebrews 10:38)

This passage of Scripture is found towards the end of an exhortation to persevere. The trusting laborer knows that he cannot please God without a true preserving faith.

This laborer plows, sows seed, and waters, and harvests at the proper times, and takes what God gives Him. If a disaster comes, he is disappointed but not overcome because his delight is in enjoying the enablement of God, having Christ and fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

A trusting laborer walks by faith and is not governed by his feelings and emotions. There is a tendency for Christians to live by their feelings and emotions. If they feel bad they have a tendency to act irresponsibly; grumbling, complaining. If they feel good, they act happy. Their behavior is determined by how they feel and this can cause them to express uncontrollable emotions and make wrong choices.

Trusting laborers know that to live according to feelings can cause them to make decisions contrary to God's will. Trusting laborers do not let emotional experiences control their direction in life or determine their faith in God. In prayer they pray like Jesus by saying, "Yet, not my will be done, but yours."

The trusting laborer commits his whole life to the Lord including his problems and good things all day long. From the time he gets up to the moment he falls asleep he is convinced that God hears His prayers. He commits everything into the hands of God and he experiences Holy Spirit strength as he triumphantly walks throughout the day.

He is able to deny self, deny wrong feelings, control his emotions and ignore all the lies of the devil. He lives a life that expresses surrender to God's will for him. He acts responsibly and lives a life worthy of the gospel he proclaims. He is able to acknowledge the Lord in all his ways by asking questions like, "Will this please the Lord? Will this enhance my relationship with Christ? Does this glorify Christ in my life and does it proclaim to others the life-changing message of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?"

One of the most trusting laborers for the Lord is the Apostle Paul. Paul was Saul before his conversion to Christianity, he was a Jewish Pharisee and was zealous for the law of God. Paul said, "Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison...: (Acts 22:3) Paul said at one time he was the worst of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) but for Jesus' sake he was shown mercy. (1 Timothy 1:16)

All true trusting laborers are like the Apostle Paul. They know that it was because of Christ that they received mercy for their sins before the Lord.

Paul had a true conversion experience and he shared about His new relationship with Christ with others. (Acts 22 and Acts 26) All trusting laborers with Jesus have had a time in their life that the Holy Spirit of Christ has revealed to them their sin. All trusting laborers will share that experience with others as the Lord opens the door for witnessing.

As we read Acts 13-14 we see that the Apostle Paul had different results in work for the Lord, just as the trusting laborer with Christ will see different results. Sometimes trusting laborers with the Lord will be a fragrance of life to some and a fragrance of death to others. (2 Corinthians 2:16)

Trusting laborers like Paul will face many trials and may face hardship and perils, but all this will happen because the Lord wants them to see His hand upon their lives and ministries. Therefore, laborers in Christ will be sure to pray for each other. The apostle Paul writes, “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” (2 Corinthians 1:8-11)

Christians, whether working in full-time ministry, in this world’s labor force or in the home are constantly falling into one of these three types: 1.) Undisciplined Laborer. 2.) Controlling Laborer or 3.) Trusting Laborer.

The Bible promises that the labors of the child of God are not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:38)

Just this past January 8, Christians celebrated the faithfulness of missionaries Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saints and Roger Youderian. These trusting laborers were killed by what many refer as the Auca Indians back in 1956.

Among those five men, Jim Elliot was a man sold out to God. He trusted God and the Lord knew he could trust him. In the fall of 1945 Jim entered Wheaton College with a total commitment to the Lord. He allowed the Lord to apply different disciplines in his life so he could get prepared for all that God had for him. In summer of 1947 the Lord made the way for Jim to stay with a missionary family in Mexico, just another training procedure for what lay ahead. Jim trusted God for His daily training and strengthening.

Now that all the material on Jim Elliot’s life is compiled, you can see that all his life God had ordained this event, the event of their death for the salvation of savage souls to come to Christ. All that God took Jim through, and the trusting laborer that Jim was and continued to be, prepared him to take the risk of meeting the Auca Indians. Jim had heard of the reputation of this group of Indians. They kept themselves isolated and they were known to be hostile.

Jim’s character proved him to be a trusting laborer, which took him out on that mission field where he was killed because an Auca, known as “George” lied about some white men planning going to eat them.

It wasn't until three years later in 1959 that Jim's wife, Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint went to live with the very Indians who killed their husbands to share the gospel with them. God knew He could trust them. When they did as the Lord asked, and souls got saved. Not only have souls been saved, but now 50 years later, young men and women are still hearing their call to go in the missions fields. Seeing God's faithfulness in Jim's life and ministry is encouraging them to make their mark, being seen as trusting laborers in the Lord's work.

Just as Jim's life, call to God and faithful labors laid the seeds for an abundant harvest, each Christian can plant the seeds that will produce a harvest as God pours His Holy Spirit out to call forth a harvest for Him. Successful seed planting is done by rejecting the temptations of being a sluggard, an "Undisciplined Laborer." By rejecting that draw of becoming a "Controlling Laborer" a person who wants to retain control and not fully obey God's instructions. Successful seed planting that is pleasing to God and beneficial to the Kingdom of God is accomplished by that "Trusting Laborer."

Let us pray!

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