



Title: What God Won't Bless
Theme: Beware of Slothfulness
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)

Illuminated Christians have a heart cry, that desire to give reasonable service unto the Lord

The church of Jesus Christ has a great privilege in working with God on the “Great Commission” as long as she is a God-loving, Word-filled, and ministry-minded disciple maker.

By God’s grace we have been called to Christ, it is by the blood of Christ He purchased His church and it is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Christ that the children of God have gifts for the purpose of building and edifying the Body of Christ. All Illuminated Christians have a heart cry, that desire to give reasonable service unto the Lord.

The apostle Paul lays down a foundation for all Christians as they enter into the year 2006 that helps maintain a proper focus in fulfilling their part of the “Great Commission.”

Listen as I read 1 Corinthians 3:6-8,11, “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)

What is our responsibility in planting the seeds of God’s Word that when watered by the Holy Spirit will give all in our area the opportunity to choose this day what God they will serve? What keeps us from becoming a hindrance to the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ that has plagued the church throughout the years?

There are two dangerous types of laborers in the church and there is one type of worker who is very much a blessing to God and beneficial to the Body of Christ. The two laborers that hinder the work of God are 1.) The “Undisciplined Laborer.” 2.) The “Controlling Laborer.” The laborer who is a blessing is 3.) The “Trusting Laborer.”

Jesus Christ has given gifts to the church and the purpose of those gifts is to prepare the body of Christ for works of service. (Ephesians 4:11-13) Over the years I have had the privilege to meet and work with some of the most useful men and women of God that you can meet. There is one thing that the Lord has taught these wonderful workmen of God. They have discovered the value of spending the first part of the year allowing the Holy Spirit to take the Word of God and cleanse their hearts so they can hear the voice of God.

Many of them spend the month of January, fasting, praying and studying the Word of God. By the time the month of January is over they have in repentance confessed sin and have heard from the Holy Spirit what the Lord would have them pray through for the following 11 months. These surrendered servants of God are able to pray through what God has called them to do, thus, enjoying the fruits of faithfulness. It would be wise for us to do the same, to spend a few weeks Biblically reflecting.

It must be noted that today’s truth from God’s Word says, “...but God made it grow.” Reward in heaven will not be based on the numbers or the results that we think we have accomplished. It will be based on faithfulness to God’s call.

I would propose to you that God’s Word gives clear instructions to those who have the heart of the Psalmist who wrote, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.” (Psalm 119:105-106)

Everyone should use the Word of God personally, practically and habitually as they serve the Lord in this world. (Thru the Bible) The Word of God is to be the constant guide of the church that longs to be used of God and enjoy the benefits in kingdom building. The fact is the soldier of Christ is only as good as his ability to understand and respond to the Lord’s will and empowerment.

Therefore, let us consider how the Lord views laborers in the Word of God. It is important to remember we will be looking at three types of laborers over the next three weeks and make a note, at any given moment Christians find themselves in one of these categories.

Our responsibility is to make ready for service unto Him in a right heart

It is imperative that the children of God understand two truths in the work of fulfilling the “Great Commission.” Our key text today helps us understand our activities and responsibilities as well as teaches us God’s role in using Christians as disciple makers.

Our part is to be faithful seed planters of the Word of God and water those seeds as the Holy Spirit directs. Christians must fully trusting in the Sovereignty of God for the harvest they receive. Our responsibility is to make ready for service unto Him in a right heart, enabling us to become “*Laborers Together with God.*”

In order for Christians to understand more accurately their part as God-loving, Word-filled, ministry-minded disciple makers they need to grasp some truths about the kind of laborers there are in the church. The type of laborers there are in the church determines the blessings of God upon any given church. Please note blessings are not necessarily given through numbers, but rather through spiritual life in the church.

The Holy Spirit tells the end of a lazy laborer in life and ministry

Often when anyone tries to point people to good Biblical discipline in the Lord’s work they are called a legalist. Dr Jim Berg so correctly points out that “A person who is pleasing self by imposing discipline upon himself and others is just as destructive as the person who is pleasing self by ignoring the discipline of himself and others. The first leads to the fleshly self-discipline of a legalist and the other produces the fleshly self-indulgence of a sluggard, and neither of these pleases the Lord.” However, there is one type of laborer that is pleasing to God.

Let us now begin to take a closer look at each of these kinds of laborers over the next three Sundays

Proverbs 24:30-34 tells of what Solomon saw as he was about observing what births forth success and failure in this life, which is usually a reflection of a spiritual condition, “I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.” (Proverbs 24:30-34)

Through the writings of Solomon, the Holy Spirit tells the end of a lazy laborer in life and ministry, the results is total ruin. It is not that a sluggard doesn’t have good intentions, he desires to have a harvest for his labors for the Bible says, “The sluggard craves [or desireth] and gets nothing,” (Proverbs 13:4)

He wants to succeed but his life is a totally made up of excuses. He makes soft choices, He wants soft work and when offered a hard task that requires work he chooses to go home, he needs more rest, his leg or back hurts, he doesn't have time to start a task. The job is too big and dangerous or unwise. He doesn't do mornings and stays up late doing unproductive things. It is true that there are morning people and late night people. There are people who their most productive work at night and there are people who are productive if they get up early.

A sluggard does not like to be pushed or held accountable. He will get to it when everyone backs off and quits hounding him. If you try to hold him accountable, he can give reason after reason to justify his inactivity. He will quit what he is doing rather than be accountable.

The Bible refers to sluggards

The Bible refers to sluggards a lot and they are never put in a good light. Proverbs 12:27 says, "The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions." (Proverbs 12:27) The writer is moved by the Holy Spirit to cause us to detest slothfulness. The use of this passage of Scripture is metaphorical: Just as one who might hunt but never take the time to cook and eat what he has shot, he is like the lazy selfish person who never completes a project. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) They are like many who hunt today only for the pleasure of it, they don't stay with the hassle of dressing the kill and preparing the meat for good tasting food. Thus, they miss out on the full benefit of the hunt.

Over the years in ministry you come across many who have sought Biblical education. The Lord makes a way for them to get into school yet they just can't seem to get through the required courses. There are many out there who have spent as long as five years in Bible College and do not have a degree in anything. They would start a vision, yet not complete the homework for the year and the next year they would try to take a different direction and not see that year through to a healthy completion either. After five years of schooling they end up \$30,000.00 plus in debt without achieving anything. Sadly, many sluggards have used the good hearts of many to get where they are, and in five years find themselves accomplishing nothing.

Churches who are under educated in these matters often try to help young Christians who have four to five years of Bible College but no major in anything.

These sluggards have many excuses for their lack of accomplishments and it is always something or someone else's fault. God made the way for them to get into a good Bible school. They would start each school year off and work hard to get good grades and in just a short while they would find that it is a lot of hard work. They would begin sleep too long, fold their hands for rest, not manage their time nor give true accountability. Before the semester ended they found themselves with bad grades. These promising young people have a wonderful speech and desire to see God produce fruit from their labors, yet they just can't pray it through.

"Barns Notes" says that a sluggard will let things slip through his hands because of lack effort and attention.

Sluggards are not just Bible College frauds. We find them in the local churches. Every church in this country can show you boxed up ministry stuff, a lot of it really good teaching material. Someone had a vision from the Lord. The Lord provided money, workers and encouragers. Then the ministry came to a stop without asking the Lord for someone to disciple or train to take the ministry over until it came to its God given completion.

This is not so with the diligent. They set their eyes on a course, they have seen God's call and provision and they pray it through. The substance of a diligent man is precious in God's sight for the diligent children of God see all their opportunities as coming from God. They find comfort in the place He puts them and they work toward accomplishing the task. They do not rob from others their time, strength and money. They fulfill their part so God will fulfill His part bringing forth growth.

I think of the ministry of Evangelist, Prophet and Pastor David Wilkerson, a man of God who has three of the five given gifts of Jesus Christ to His church. Pastor David's ministry as an evangelist eventually ends up taking him all over the world sharing the Gospel of Christ. His service to the Lord finds a place in New York and his being kicked out of the court room leads to an open door to preaching to gangs. That births forth the Teen Challenge ministry, which now has been passed on to other men of God. Pastor David Wilkerson did not just use the opportunity to make a name for himself and let a ministry just come to a stop. It grew into something. The ministry saw its completion in him, but moved on to other men in different parts of the world.

Because of his diligence in the Lords work, God gave him another ministry which several of us get to enjoy the benefits of today, "World Challenge." This ministry involves many others who help Mr. Wilkerson get the Word of God out around the World. In 1987 Robert Phillips, Don Wilkerson and David Wilkerson founded "Times Square Church" in New York. Now that Pastor David has retired to travel with his son to ministering to pastors all around the world, the Lord has replaced David with several great preachers to do God's work at Times Square Church.

The sluggard is blocked with thorns

Pastor David is a very diligent man of God and prizes his possessions of the gift of prophet, evangelist, and pastor. These gifts cause him to throw off those desires and temptations to give up and not pray ministries through. The Lord raised him up co-laborers that have the same diligence of heart and he has given them growth from their labors.

The Bible says even more about the fruit of the sluggard. Proverbs 15:19a says, "The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns..." (Proverbs 15:19a) The whole of Scripture teaches that nothing is meant to work unless the Lord is in the center of what you are doing. This is especially true if you are proclaiming to be a Christian. The truth of this portion of Scripture teaches that the way of the sluggard finds obstacles along in life. These obstacles are different from trials that are meant to grow Christians in Christ.

Many are suffering because of their laziness in studying God's Word and not surrendering to it in a right heart, suffering for not establishing that relationship with a local Bible believing church. God uses these thorns for the chastening of the sluggard who wants to live for self and ignore the Lord's will for him.

These thorns manifest themselves in many ways such as through financial difficulties or poor health because of undisciplined eating or exercising. Wanted careers and job opportunities continue to fall through. Plans for success never come about. There is no peace, joy and faith in God is diminished tragically. Often these sluggards are given over to despair.

God's mercy contains two elements

God's mercy contains two elements. The first is an inward concern for those who are bound by sin or some miserable plight. The second is an outward action aimed at relieving the sinful condition of the person caught in the bondage of being a sluggard. It is God's mercy to bring Christians to repentance through allowing difficult circumstances to come in their lives because of not living a surrendered life to the Lord.

Hebrews 12:5-8, and verse 11 says, "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons... No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.'" (Hebrews 12:5-8,11)

Every God-loving, Word-filled, ministry-minded disciple maker will be more concerned about the condition of his heart before the Lord than over the unpleasantness of being chastised for laziness.

The question the Holy Spirit has for the spiritual hearts of Christians today is when the Lord cries out for their attention, will they continue to go their own way or will they submit to the Lord right now?

I remember when I was being a sluggard. I was working long hours and hard, however, I was ignoring my call to study and the provision God had made for me to get my schooling done. He had allowed me to get laid off of work, even though I was the highest rated truck driver, a very good employee and preaching every Sunday somewhere. When I got laid off of work my back was killing me so I could not go back to nailing horseshoes on horse's feet or get a good paying labor job and I was not smart enough to get an office job. My schooling was not complete so I could not receive credentials or ordination from any decent ministry. The Lord had my attention and I was able to hear clearly what I was to do. He spoke to my wife, to the leadership of this church, to Pastor Ronald Scheimo and to me, "Get your schooling done." Upon producing the fruit of repentance, I saw the Lord's wonderful forgiveness and mighty provision for family and myself.

"One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys."

The Bible says more about the sluggard in proverbs 18:9, "One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys." (Proverbs 18:9) Laziness in the ministry, the church, the home and the work place is just as destructive as the man who purposely destroys things. There is no room for continued laziness in God's work. All one needs to do to get rid of it is expect true accountability and the sluggard will be gone or he comes to know the joy of diligence in all he does.

I want to share one last passage of Scripture on what the Bible cautions about sluggards in the work place and the church. Proverbs 10:26 says, "As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him." (Proverbs 10:26)

Pure vinegar to the teeth is a very unpleasant experience and smoke to the eyes is a hindrance to all progress. This little proverb portrays the aggravation in sending a lazy servant on a mission of the Lord's work or in work place. It always ends up a confusing and unpleasant ordeal for everyone involved.

I knew of a man who so wanted to be in ministry, yet in the work place he was known to be a lazy person. They were glad to see him quit and go into a ministry that had poor regulations on how they selected ministers of the gospel. They did not focus on what God's Word said is an overseer of a ministry. In just a few years this man brought frustration and confusion to that ministry he was working in. He was beginning to make the name of ministry unpleasant in the community he worked in, therefore he was asked to leave.

There are three types of laborers found mentioned in the Word of God and two of them are displeasing to the Lord. One type of laborer is a blessing to God and the Body of Christ. We have just talked about one, the sluggard, next week we will talk about the controlling laborer and on week three will talk about the trusting laborer.

At any one moment of service to the Lord Christians find themselves in one of these three categories. They need to be like those faithful men and women of God who have the courage to spend a good portion of the first of the year allowing the Holy Spirit to examine their hearts and move them to becoming the laborer that truly trusts in God, so the local church can see the Lord bring forth spiritual and numerical growth. It was once said, "Healthy things grow" especially spiritually and yes even in numbers to those who are totally faithful.

Let us pray!