Labor of Love

I. TWO PERSPECTIVES OF LABOR: IS 49

A. Jesus' view of His ministry in this age (49:4-5): *There were two perspectives of Jesus' ministry*— in the eyes of men Jesus' ministry appeared to be in vain, but in the eyes of God it was glorious. *All of God's servants must choose between these two perspectives*.

4 I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and in vain; yet surely My just reward is with the LORD, and My work with my God." 5And now the LORD says, who formed Me from the womb…I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD… (Isa. 49:4-5)

B. ***I have labored in vain:*** Men concluded that Jesus spent His strength in vain because He did not achieve anything notable in their eyes during His 33 years. In light of God's calling and empowerment of Jesus, one might expect only successes and not delays.

C. ***Glorious in the eyes of the Lord:*** Jesus had confidence that God saw His life as glorious. He understood that the fullness of God's promises and rewards are delayed until the age to come.

II. LABOR: VANITY OR LOVE?

1 Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it… (Ps 127:1)

A. In the Bible, "vain labor" refers to work or effort that ultimately amounts to nothing because it is labor done *apart from God*, labor done for the *wrong motives*, and labor done *without eternal value*. The word *vain* in Scripture usually means "empty, futile, useless or without profit"

B. Some in the body of Christ put much labor towards building their own kingdom, networks, and brand rather than building the body of Christ. This type of labor may seem to produce fruit, because of church growth. However, if the Lord is not in the work then it's vanity couched in bible verses. When our ministry and labor is motivated by our deep desire to be impressive before men then our labor is in vain because our labor is done to serve our vanity.

1 Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do… that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. (Mt 6:1-2)

C. Some wrongly assume that the metric for God's favor and His presence is growth. Meaning, if we are growing, God is with us. If the money is coming in then God is building the house. They would believe the counter as well… if we are not growing and the money is not coming in God is not with us and our labor is in vain.

D. To have labor that is not in vain we want to do labor:

1. *With God:* 2 Corinthians 6:1 says, ***"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you to not receive the grace of God in vain…"*** We are "workers together *with Him*." We are to work with the understanding that we work *for* Him and we are to work with the revelation that we work *with* Him.

2. *With the right motives:* 1 Thes 1:3 says, ***"Remembering without ceasing your work of Faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ…"*** Our motive for our labor is love for God and love for our neighbor. All the work we do without love profits nothing but work done with love will last. *(1 Cor 13)*

3. *With eternal value/perspective:* Col 3:23-24 says, ***"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*** The bible is abundant in motivating us to labor with the truth that the Lord sees and rewards.

III. OUR LABOR IS SEEN BY GOD - GLORIOUS IN HIS SIGHT

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb 6:10)

A. According to Hebrews 6, if the Lord were to "forget" our labor done in love, He would be committing an injustice. Just as it is certain that He is just in all His works, so too may we be confident that He will not forget our labor of love.

B. We work before the eyes of the Lord. Always confident that He sees the thoughts and intents of the heart and records all deeds done for the sake of Love.

3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. (Mt 6:3-4)

C. One of the more difficult emotions to work though is the feeling of insignificance. We have a longing for greatness and lasting impact and if we perceive our efforts affects nothing… depression is at the door. Much of the body of Christ is walking around in a lifeless living constantly battling depression wondering if anything really matters. However, when we grow in confidence that our labor affects and impacts His heart our joy can be full. We begin to live before the audience of one not in language alone but reality.

D. When battling the feeling of being overlooked turn to the One who sees. We have His attention.

IV. WE DO NOT LABOR ALONE

A. In addition to laboring with Him we labor with other saints. We are part of the body of Christ. Paul exhorts the church *to strive together for the faith of the gospel.* (Phil 1:27) The effective work is when every part does its designed purpose resulting in the edification of the body in love.

From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:16)

B. In 1 Corinthians Paul writes that there is one who plants and then there is one who waters. This principle leads to *four* principles that give a frame work for fruitful labor.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. (1 Cor 3:6-9)

1. *There is a mutual dependence upon one another:* A "planter" by himself yields no fruit. A "water" man by himself yields no fruit. They must work together to create environment for God to do His part.

2. *God gives the increase:* God and God alone is the one who has the ability to bring forth in the increase. It is He who breaths life upon the efforts of weak but sincere vessels.

3. *The planter and waterer are one:* Though their roles differ, Paul (the planter) and Apollos (the waterer) share the same purpose… the building up of God's Church. They are *"one"* in mission and spirit. Unity of purpose with diversity of function are the marks of true co-laboring with no rivalry in Christ's vineyard, only shared service.

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4. *Each one receives his own reward:* The labor is shared but the reward for the labor is a detailed response from heaven awarded to each person *"according to his own labor."*

V. THERE IS A DUE SEASON FOR REAPING

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Gal 6:9)

A. ***In due season:*** God has an appointed time. The phrase comes from the Greek *kairos* meaning an appointed, proper, or God-ordained time. It points to God's timing for reward or harvest, not necessarily our timing. Paul uses the picture of a farmer. Just as crops ripen at the right time the good we sow in obedience to God will bring fruit in God's season.

B. ***Let us not grow weary/do not lose heart:*** We are tempted to grow weary and lose heart when we begin to evaluate with our time frame and according to our calendar.

C. The delay before harvest is one of the most consistent patterns in Scripture. God often allows long seasons of waiting to develop faith, humility, endurance, and intimacy with Him.

D. One of the temptations in the delay is to become sluggish. In Hebrews 6, The Greek word used is (nōthros) meaning: *slow*, *dull*, *lazy*, or *spiritually sluggish*. The idea is not simply physical laziness but spiritual dullness, a lack of eagerness to hear, learn, and apply God's truth.

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promise. (Heb 6:11-12)

VI. OUR LABOR IS MOTIVATED BY THE RESURRECTION

58 Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor 15:58)

A. *The Risen Christ (vv. 1–11):* Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel message that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, all according to the Scriptures.

B. *The Risen Christ, Our Hope (vv. 12–19):* If Christ has not risen, then faith is empty, preaching is useless, and believers are still in sin. But because He has risen, our hope is real and eternal.

C. *The Last Enemy Destroyed (vv. 20–28):* Christ's resurrection guarantees ours. He is the firstfruits, and all who belong to Him will be raised at His coming.

D. *Effects of Denying the Resurrection (vv. 29–34):* If there's no resurrection, Christian sacrifice makes no sense. Why endure persecution or live righteously if death ends everything?

E. *A Glorious Body (vv. 35–49):* Paul explains that our future, resurrected bodies will be glorious, powerful, and spiritual, unlike our current weak and perishable ones. Just as we bear Adam's image now, we will bear the image of Christ in the resurrection.

F. *Our Final Victory (vv. 50–57):* At the last trumpet, the dead will be raised and believers will be changed — death will be swallowed up in victory.

G. ***Vs 58 Therefore:*** He ends this teaching on the resurrection with this application. Therefore… *be steadfast, immovable, always abound in the work of the Lord…*