
LABOR FOR CHRIST

Labor brings a lot of connotations with it, doesn't it? Of course, we know what labor and delivery is. Whether you're a mom or not, you know the gist of it. It can be really tough (to put it mildly). Being a good wife can be a labor. Raising children to be godly adults can be a labor. Bible study can sometimes be a labor, especially when it's required week after week. One thing is for certain, if we don't work at these things, they either won't get done, or the job is inadequate. Doing anything half-heartedly never brings the desired results. Labor is work, generally speaking.

Today we look at laboring for Christ, and what that means for us.

As we looked at holding fast the word of life, we know that there's still work on our part in doing that. Well, not really work on our part, more just submitting to His working in and through us. But we saw yesterday that we are to share the gospel message of Christ our Savior and we are to become the "hands and feet" of Christ to the world around us. We are to labor for Christ, and wouldn't you agree that it should be a labor of love?

Why do we love? Read 1 John 4:7-19 and take some notes about love:

Read Philippians 2:16 again. You'll see Paul talks about not running in vain, and if we look at the example of a runner we can see a picture of what a Christian should be doing as well.

Look at the mental attitude of the runner -

~ A runner has a love of running. A true runner becomes addicted to running, they can't

stop running. Running is not only a discipline for them, it becomes their release from the pressures of the world around them.

Here's a question for you, how much do you love Christ? What if I rephrased that - How much do you love *living for Christ*?

Read 1 John 2:15-17 and then perhaps answer those questions again.

~ A runner is committed to run. He trains and runs with excellence. He runs to win.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:23-27. Have you made a commitment to Him? Or maybe the question is - How committed are you to Him?

~ A runner is disciplined, bringing his body into alignment with his desires and determination.

We are to be disciplined also. Bringing ourselves under the control of the Holy Spirit, disciplining ourselves to live in Him. Not always easy, in fact, never that easy, but neither is running to win!

Read I Timothy 4:6-10

Paul's application in his own life is recorded in **2 Timothy 4:7-8**

What did Paul keep?

And what is he going to receive?

Who else is to receive it?

The Christian walk involves labor, but it certainly has its rewards. We know that we are to absorb the mind of Christ. That doesn't happen by holding the Bible up to our head, there's no blue tooth transfer happening. No, we must open the pages and dive in. Please, never just be satisfied with gleaning from the surface, dig in deep.

As you learn from the word, walk under the control of the Holy Spirit so that He can produce good works in us. And of course, hold fast the word of life for others to see and hear as you live for Christ.

Remember kater-gadz-esthe, where we are told to "work out" our faith with "fear and trembling"? We are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to achieve that, and I say cooperate because God is the One at work in us (we saw that in Philippians 1:6 and 2:13). We are to work *with* God for the purpose He has designed for us to live. He has developed a specific plan for each of our lives. For mine, and for yours. Yours will be different than mine, and mine will be different from yours. But in accepting salvation from Christ, we, in turn, gave ourselves to Him for His purpose, His plan, and like it or not, it will require labor. It will require some of those other words we aren't fond of, too, like diligence, discipline, commitment and foremost, a constant love of Christ. As Paul stated, our conclusion must also be, *"to live is Christ, to die is gain."*

Paul says in v. 16 that he doesn't want to run or labor in vain. He goes on to tell them that their living out Christ will be the cause of joy for him. I can understand that, as there's no greater joy as a mom, or as a teacher, than to see your children, or students holding fast to what has been taught. Of course, the only way we know they are learning is by seeing the results of it, to see if they, too, are "laboring for Christ". James, in his book, asks the question, what good is it to say you have faith but not have anything that shows you have faith? *Faith was meant to live itself out in a life that shows it exists.* If we say we have faith, but then don't live like it, what's our faith really in? When we live out what we have been taught, it is a joy to those who have taught us and it fulfills the purpose God has for us.

Paul wants to rejoice over these Philippian believers in the day of Christ. Remember the “day of Christ” is when believers will rise to meet Christ in the air, and judgment of believers begins. Paul is talking about his having a basis for rejoicing because those to whom he ministered have held forth the word of life and can stand before the Judgment seat without condemnation (Romans 8:1-2), their deeds will be ones that bring rewards. So then, "holding forth the word of life" becomes the visible evidence of laboring for Christ. To those who have done the ministering to the ones doing these things, they are rewarded to see their labor was not in vain. That brings rejoicing, just as Paul says.

In regards to laboring for Christ, it comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it involves being an intercessor for those that have not yet accepted salvation. There are those that we have prayed long and hard for that they might accept Christ. We have lived out Christ before them and still no reply. Here's my thought on that - don't give up! There is still time. God is still at work. As long as they have breath, there is hope. We must hold fast, and let our light so shine. Let them see us steadfast and stable in the midst of chaos because we have a God we trust with all our being. Let them see us rise above the circumstances of this life to hold forth the word of life in all its glory and truth. Let them see us labor for Christ out of sheer love and joy because of all He has done for us. When we live out the word, responding with the mind of Christ to the situations around us, we will be productive, there will be fruit.

Close your time this morning by reading again, Matthew 5:16

Hold fast! Run to win. Labor for Christ. And to God be the glory.

REVIEW

~We are to love. 1 John 4:7-19,

~ Like a runner we need to run to win, have a love of running, be committed to the run and be disciplined to stay the course. 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 1 Timothy 4:6-9

~ We have Paul's example. 2 Timothy 4:7-8

~ We are to labor for Christ. it's a productive life. Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, Romans 8:1-2, Matthew 5:16