

THE WORK OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

Scripture: S/lected passages from the Gospel of John.

Intro: For several weeks now I have been speaking in our Sunday night services on various truths related to the Christian life. We have thought together about certain doctrines which we need to know, about assurance of salvation, about the need for the Word, about prayer. Tonight I want to conclude this present series with a message on the work of God. One of the most neglected truths in the Bible is that which has to do with serving the Lord. We find everything being done these days in the name of Christian service, but usually someone is coming up with a special project to meet some particular need. What we need to do is to go to the Word of God as we do about everything else that has to do with our lives as God's people and find out what the Word teaches us about serving the Lord.

I want to speak particularly tonight from the Gospel of John, but before I do I want to make a couple of observations.

First, in talking about serving the Lord we must recognize one great principle which the Lord has given us through the prophet Isaiah:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8).

Every servant of the Lord has to learn this.

Abraham had to learn it when he waited for over 25 years for a son. Moses had to learn it when he went to Pharaoh the first time, and was rejected. Joshua had to learn it when the Israelites were defeated at Ai. Samuel had to learn it when he went to find a king for Israel among the sons of Jesse. Saul, Israel, and the Philistines had to learn it when David went out against Goliath. Darius had to learn it when he put Daniel into the den of lions. Peter had to learn it when he cut off the ear of Malchus. Saul of Tarsus began to learn it when the Lord Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus.

The Bible is full of illustrations.

Therefore, you can be sure that, if you set out to serve the Lord according to the way that you think it should be done, you are probably going to do it the wrong way.

The second observation I want to make is this: The Devil often keeps us away from some very important truths by overemphasizing certain truths which we find in the Word of God. For example: He emphasizes the humanity of Jesus to the point of denying the Deity of our Lord. So what do we do? In our attempt to defend

the Deity of Christ we completely ignore the humanity of Christ --and yet some of the most precious truths about our Lord are to be learned from His humanity.

Another example: The liberals have made Jesus nothing but an example in their attempt to do away with what the Scriptures teach about salvation. What do we do? We shudder every time we hear the word example used in connection with our Lord, NOT REALIZING THAT HE USED THE WORD ABOUT HIMSELF!

Please turn to John 13:12-17, esp. v. 15.

Then look at John 12:26a, "If any man serve me, let him follow me"--not just going around where He went, but doing what He did!

Therefore, we see this amazing truth in the Gospel of John: The one Gospel which emphasizes the Deity of Christ above every other truth also gives us, side by side with it, the teaching that Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry sets the pattern of what our service should be.

Tonight I want to take four particulars from the life of our Lord to help us understand what we need to be concerned with as we seek to serve the Lord today.

I. THE WORK IS GOD, THE FATHER'S, WORK--not ours.

What do we mean by this? We mean that it is not for us to decide what we want to do for the Lord, or to look around to find something which needs to be done. We do not make the plans, and then ask Him to bless us. No, we must find out what HE is doing, and enter into His work.

This is where pastors and churches have gotten completely away from the Word of God today. They think that serving the Lord means that they are to choose what the work shall be. And the whole fault in this area is not just with the liberals. Evangelicals have the same problem.

What did the Lord say about His own ministry, because if anyone had the right to choose His own work, He did! Cf. John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29; 9:4; 17:4.

What was that work? The Gospel of John shows our Lord doing two things: seeking the sinner, and then teaching those who turned to Him.

But let us look farther. We see in the second place that He was conscious of

II. A DIVINE CALLING. He had been sent by the Father. He had not come "on His own."

Over 40 times in the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus refers to Himself as having been sent by the Father. Let us just look at 5--and 2 of these involve us. Cf. John 4:34; 7:29; 9:4; then, 17:18; 20:21.

Ultimately our involvement in the Lord's work is not because of our choice, but because the Father has called us to enter into His work. The NT is very clear on this point.

But there is a third point of importance.

III. THE MESSAGE.

Just how much freedom did even our Lord have on this point. Cf. 7:16-18; 8:26; 12:49, 50.

The OT prophets and the NT apostles leave no doubt but that their message was one given to them by God, and that they had no choice but to deliver it to men as it had been given to them!

Finally,

IV. THE EFFECT, THE RESULTS, THE FRUIT. This seems to be the one thing that most of the Lord's servants are interested in. If we have numerical results, then we tend to justify any method that might be used. What did the Lord Jesus say about the results, about the work that would be accomplished?

There is a great deal in the Gospel of John about this. Cf. 5:19, 30; 6:37, 44; 8:28; 10:29, 38.

When you consider such amazing statements from the Son of God, we should not be surprised to read what we find in John 15:4, 5.

Concl: "If any man serve me, let him follow me" (John 12:26a).
"Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8b).

When Paul wrote to Timothy about the Word he assured him that in the Word he had everything that would equip him to be a faithful and effective servant of the Lord--as the Lord counts effectiveness! In the life of the Lord Jesus we have the example, the pattern. If these things were true of Him, how much more should they be true of us--that we recognize that this is His work, that He is the One who does the work through us, that we are to give His message, realizing that the only reason we can possibly have a part in it is because we have been called by Him. May the Lord teach us what these all mean so that we serve Him in these days according to His ways--not ours!