

The Christian Helper.

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"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." II. Cor. 1: 24.

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THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH.

We are accustomed to draw comfort from Paul's zeal for Christ, and his accompanying diligence in business; we know that his work as a tent-maker did not prevent his work as a child of God, and an apostle of Christ. And why should we not reap the same comfort from a higher example still? Why should not we behold our Saviour as he was for years—A CARPENTER? 'Oh!' say some, 'it destroys our reverence; it is making a sacred thing common.' The sooner Christian men and women get out of the notion that there is anything degrading or unbecoming in the lowliest business, the better. The sooner they conquer those absurd prejudices which cannot look with equal adoration on Christ with the hammer and chisel in his hand the better. The sooner we can make sacred things common without losing their sacredness the better. The sooner the mist which many cast about our Saviour as a man *out of the world* is dissolved the better. The great fault of much of the religion of the present day is its want of simplicity,—its want of spirituality. It will not derive its true and real greatness from the in-dwelling Spirit, but from something external. Just as we paint Christ as separate and far removed from his earthly calling—his business pursuits,—so do we seem to consider that religion is not in our daily labour what it is in the sanctuary or the closet. We do not see that Christ in us, by his Spirit, constitutes vital Christianity, and not any particular state of life or circumstances. Now our blessed Saviour, by his earlier life has shown us how mistaken we are, and that not only his religion, but even himself, all spotless and holy as he was, could exist in a workshop. He has contributed his own example to prove to men that physical labour, mental exertion, and temporal anxieties are not incompatible with their duty to God. What cruel mockeries must

have attended these unhistoried days of Christ! How "the carpenter" must have been reviled as he prepared for his future work, and boldly received the vices of those around him! At twelve years old he was about his Father's business, and he speaks of it as though it were a common employment even at *that* age. Doubtlessly he did not decrease in devotion to that work; but as he grew, it grew too; and all youth—all carpenter—though he was, he forgot not his mission to fallen man. What difficulties he must have encountered! At the beck of the inhabitants of Nazareth; hard toil and small remuneration, such as every like business in a very obscure town must involve; a mother (there is reason to believe) to support; and yet at the same time to prepare himself for his mission, and to be absorbed in all the mighty purposes of his work! Then if an earthly calling did not disqualify Christ for the redemption of a world, why should it disqualify his disciple for a far less work-to-day? They may have many anxieties—so had he; they may have beings dearer than their own life depending on them for support—so had he; they may be surrounded by blasphemers and haters of that which is good, so was he. And yet all this did not prevent his complete devotion, heart and soul, to his heavenly Father's business.

Let no Christian, then, seek to attribute his short-comings to his worldly circumstances. Let him not dare to plead that his occupations and his cares destroy his piety; that struggling in the mighty arena of industry against poverty utterly weakens him for the good fight of faith. The example of Christ himself gives the lie to the excuse. And a weight of business is so far from being ground for despondency that we have the Word of God fully with us when we assert that Christ having been tempted, is touched with a feeling of our infirmities and will, undoubtedly, specially assist those praying tugging disciples who are labouring under precisely the same load which he once bore. Business if heavy, and especially if uncertain, is a suffering—that we admit; but it is a fellow-suffering with Christ—literally so; and therefore we maintain that to the true Christian the suffering is an indication of offered grace, and a pledge of redeeming sympathy.

Nowhere among the ranks of the unemployed and leisureable can so near an approach to Christ's own example be found as that man, who in the midst of business forgets not his Saviour, but can exhibit at one and the same time spirituality of soul and industry of mind or hand—the power of the Spirit and the diligence of the mechanic or the merchant.

IDLE CHRISTIANS.

Idle Christians! The words rang in our ears long after they dropped from the lips of the fiend with whom we were speaking. We could not do otherwise than reflect upon them as being very peculiar. Idle Christians! Who are they? How we should stare if we were to read or hear of drunken Christians, swearing Christians, dishonest Christians—indeed such an anomaly would not be allowed. And yet we must allow that there are such strange things in the churches as idle Christians. How can we account for it? If we understand rightly, the name "Christian" implies a follower or disciple of Jesus Christ. Was *He* idle? No; He went about doing good. He never wasted a moment, never lost an opportunity of rendering some good service; He laid Himself out in acts of usefulness, He came to finish the work that His Father gave Him to do, and He rested not until He could say, "It is finished." Are not Christians the followers of our Lord's Apostles who preached in His name, and who wrote under the guidance of His Spirit the contents of the New Testament? Were they idle Christians, or do their doctrines encourage idleness? No; they were active, zealous, laborious followers of Christ, and all their doctrines teach us to redeem the time, and to serve God and His cause with holy fervency. What then can be the reason why any Christians are idle? Is there not enough to do, are not men perishing by thousands—is there not room enough in the world for all to labor—*is there not variety of employment to suit every taste?* Assuredly! Then what can be the reason that there should be cause for complaining of idle Christians?

Perhaps these brethren and sisters think that they can be of no service in the Lord's work. Have they *tried?* Have