

Sermon:

Preached Before the P. E. Island Association, on Sunday Morning, July 2nd, at Montague Bridge.

Therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as ye know, etc., etc. 1st Cor. 15:58.

This verse may be regarded as an appendix, (something added,) and may be likened to a very precious gem, (the "Kohinoor," dropping from a necklace of pearls in graceful form, and adding much to its value.

You observe the sense is complete without it, and yet how exceedingly precious is the addition to the context, especially so to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are busily engaged in "works of faith and labors of love," toiling both at home and abroad in our Great Master's vineyard. "Not in vain in the Lord."

It stands in connection, and (may I say?) in a peculiarly comforting way, with one of the most solemn portions of God's word, and containing one of the grandest, and most blessed doctrines of Holy writ. The resurrection of the body from the "cold corrupting grave," of its final victory over death, hell and satan of all true believers in Christ.

Then also our thoughts are carried forward, in imagination the veil is lifted, for a while we behold the grand consummation of all things, the great "White Throne" is set, the ponderous "Book" is opened. The sun in its splendour pales into utter insignificance at the ineffable glory! The moon hides herself in "obscurity, the stars like untimely figs fall," and vanish, and before the "August Tribunal" are gathered, the dead "both small and great, bond and free," "out of every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue," under heaven, while unnumbered millions, living are assembled to be judged out of the things which are written in that "Book of God," and while the one part are sentenced to everlasting punishment "driven from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power," the righteous shall receive the reward of their faith and obedience, a "crown of life," and an inheritance, (reserved in heaven) "incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away," and it shall be given to those who are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

We come now more closely to the text and observe first, The nature of the work defined; secondly, we shall observe the manner in which it is to be performed, and lastly we shall endeavor to take some comfort from the certainty of success attending our "work in the Lord." "Forasmuch as ye know," etc., etc.

1st. Then, the nature of the work defined. "The work of the Lord." It is emphatically "the work of the Lord." It is a most practical thing. None of us are to be mere loiterers in the great vineyard nor useless drones feebly buzzing around, or humming about the hive, neither must we be a hinderance to others who are actively employed working for their Lord and Master. Says the Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, "we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." O brethren! There is plenty to be done in the Lord's vineyard, we need not go far to seek an opportunity to put our earnest desires into active operation. Work, verily lies on either hand, and as at the early spring and summer of the year, when weeds grow apace, and cover run the grain, seed sown, and flowers, the soil (though we may not hear her voice, yet still she doth cry, "To the work! to the work!") So the Christian is called to the far grander work, and nobler effort of seeking by all means and in every place, not only to extirpate weeds of evil abounding and sin in its various forms, etc, but at the same-time to seek to win many for Christ. And "the eternal glory yet to be revealed." Says Solomon, "He that sgetteth souls is wise." Yea, although in so doing, he may lose money, health and strength." Then let us remember this, we cannot be actively engaged in "watering the souls of others, without our own souls receiving a saturation with the like precious blessing at the same time. Many and many an one is asking these questions, "Well, what can I do? I have no talent, my efforts would be vain and futile if I did engage in any work for the Master. I'm such a poor bungler at best." Do you not find through life, that men and women are a rule have always plenty of excuses ready framed, if they but wish to escape the somewhat onerous task that conscience and the Bible bid them perform, but how will these excuses about doing our duty stand in the clear light of the judgment throne and the coming eternity? To us all who love His name, or profess so to do, there comes the command, "Go work today in my vineyard."

"Work for the night is coming,
Under the sunset skies,
While their bright tints are glowing,
Work, for daylight flies;
Work till the last beam fadeth,
Eadeth to shine no more,
Work while the night is darkening,
When man's work is o'er."

Work 1—There is a peculiar pleasure in labour to which the idle, the unemployed are utter strangers; The author of the book of Proverbs has said, "The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns," now such a way cannot be a very enjoyable one to say the least. Those who pursue this unpleasant, not to say painful and tormenting way, but linger out a wretched existence, which is but a slow death. Thus says Solomon, "The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labor." "Pray, of what did your brother die?" said the Marquis of Spinola to Sir Horace Vere, "one day. The reply was most significant. "He died of having nothing to do!" Alas said Spinola that is enough to kill any general of us all!"

Then furthermore, There is the work of cultivating personal piety, hence the command, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." As the living tree in its proper season works out the life within, the process bringing leaves, blossoms and ultimately fruit, luscious, attractive, golden, so you, who have the life of God in your souls, prove it in daily activities of life, in your leaves, blossoms and fruits; let leaves witness a good profession, blossoms of holy and lovely consistency of character, fruits of peace, joy, gentleness, goodness, meekness, etc., with patience under affliction and the trials and dispensations of an over ruling Providence, not a mere theory, but a living, abiding practical result. "The work of the Lord," requires all our energies. There must be no half heartedness in His service. See how the Infinite Jehovah puts it in the Decalogue, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." You see it is not to be a half-hearted kind of thing. We have need to be enthusiastic. Brethren and sisters, have you ever analyzed this word? "Enthuze?" God within think of this!

Furthermore, or secondly, observe the manner in which this work is to be performed. "Steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." That of course, means stability of character and principle. Instability will spoil the finest plans and conduct too. The character of Reuben should never be applicable to any of God's servants, although I am almost afraid at times it does. "Reuben, unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Just fancy putting any dependence upon such a changing, yielding creature as water; like trusting the ocean, all very well during the "Halecyon days", but beneath its too treacherous surface, "full many a storm and hurricane doth brew," and ere we may be aware its full force may be upon us, sweeping away our fondest hopes, engulfing our frail bark and dashing us to destruction in its fury. We want firm principles formed from the teachings of this "grand old Book" before us, unwavering," for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed. A double minded man is instable in all his ways." Once then having gotten the trust, hold it, it is thy very life! Instability of character, or principle in professing Christians and also in others who know the truth, is one of the most trying ordeals a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ has to endure, what so trying after years of faithful toil, thousands of prayers and earnest sermons to find some whom he trusted, begin to be "moved about by every wind of doctrine," like a feather driven first in one direction then in another, till he, or she has tried all points of the compass" perhaps, and at length becomes "beautifully nil", a "nothingarian." Some people I have found going to and fro the earth, begun as Calvinists, then were Arminians, then found them among Quakers, and the Brethren, then alas, having no principles, they drift like a rudderless ship upon the rocks of agnosticism. They would appear to be "all things to all men" (a kind of Vicar of Bray), but without winning any for Christ and glory wasted, useless, ruined lives. Now Christians are to be pillars, pillars are not as moveable furniture, to be placed in different ways, different positions, according to the whims and fancies of different persons who may chance to come near. Aye, it would indeed be a sorry day with some buildings if the pillars were but like the people who occupy sittings therein. Christians are temples to be firmly cemented in the bonds of faith and love, with firm foundations. Let us ever remember that the Master saith, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write (or engrave) upon him, the name of my God and I will engrave or write upon him my new name."

In the Cathedral of St. Marks in Venice, a marvellous building, lustrous with an oriental splendour far beyond description, there are pillars said to have been brought from Solomon's temple. These are of alabaster (a substance firm and durable as granite and yet transparent so that the light glows through them.) Behold therefore an emblem of what all true pillars of the church should be, firm in their faith and transparent in their character, men of simple mould, ignorant of tortuous ways, or deceptive methods; men of strong will, not readily to be led aside, or bent from their uprightness. A few such alabaster men there are, may the great Master builder place more of them in His temple.

Thirdly. The last thought is the blessed certainty

of success attending our "Work in the Lord." "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." O what a most blessed promise and comfort fellow laborer with God! "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love." Many works that we may undertake with a fair chance of success attending diligent application may end most disastrously, we may see all our toil, all our energies, all our deep thoughted plans suddenly collapse or schemes entirely frustrated by unforeseen circumstances, something like the "tower of Babel," unfinished, standing to mock our agony or remorse. We saw wealth melt like snow beneath the sun; years of labor completely thrown away and it may be from a state of affluence reduced by one fell stroke to poverty, or very straitened circumstances. Our Lord does not promise that all legitimate businesses will be a grand success, where colossal fortunes are made by the few thousands go down and their wealth becomes in a great measure the material from which the modern Croesus enriches himself and builds up a princely fortune. Many works purely philanthropic go under for want of funds to make them buoyant and a grand and lasting benediction to the human race, the project was good and Christlike so far, but sufficient interest among the wealthy and well to do was not excited to make it the blessing to mankind the originator contemplated and hoped, and so we might go on ad libitum. But the "work of the Lord" cannot fail. "Heaven and earth may pass away." The elements melt with fervent heat," mountains may depart. Kingdoms may fall and decay, stars like untimely figs may drop, and everything sublunary be wiped out of existence, but the word Divine cannot possibly pass unfulfilled. It matters but little what work may be assigned you, whether preaching as with trumpet voice the glorious Gospel, labouring in the Sunday School for the Master, distributing religious tracts, or literature, visiting the sick, sorrowing and afflicted or helping the destitute with your means, wooing by a consistent, holy life and sweet voice of a tender and loving sympathy the outcast, abandoned, the wretched and vile, like "Eva Booth of the Salvation Army," each and all these are works that the Archangel Gabriel might covet to perform, or the brightest seraph before the "eternal throne would gladly undertake, and in which they unweariedly delight for such labour is not, cannot be in vain in the Lord." Brethren! we should aim to be too active to freeze, too busy to stagnate; we should endeavor to be like Oliver Cromwell who not only struck when the iron was hot, but made it hot by striking like the missionary who said: "If there be happiness on earth it is in labouring for Christ;" yea like our blessed Master whose very meat and drink was to do the will of God. The vineyard must be cultivated, and the command is to enter in and work.

Men said the old smith was foolishly careful as he wrought on the great chain he was making in his dingy shop in the heart of the great city. But he heeded not their words, but only wrought with greater painstaking. Link after link he fastened and at last the chain was finished and carried away. In time it lay coiled upon the deck of a great ship which sped back and forth on the ocean. There seemed no use for it, for the great anchor was never needed and the chain lay there uncoiled. So years passed. But one night there was a terrible storm and the ship was in sore peril of being hurled upon the rocks. Anchor after anchor was dropped, but none of them availed. The chains were broken like threads. At last the mighty sheet anchor was cast into the sea, and the old chain was quickly uncoiled and run out until it grew taut. All watched to see if it would bear the awful strain. It sang in the wild storm as the vessel's weight surged upon it. It was a moment of intense anxiety. The ship with its cargo of a thousand souls depended upon this one chain. What now if the old smith had wrought carelessly even on one link of his chain? But he had put honesty and truth and invincible strength into every part of it, and it stood the test, holding the ship in safety until the storm was over, and morning broke. Herein is a lesson for us:

"O that each in the day
Of His coming may say,
I have fought my way through,
I have finished the work thou didst give
me to do."

"O! that each from His Lord
May receive the glad word,
Well and faithfully done,
Enter into my joy and sit down on my
Throne."

ARROW POINTS.

By Pastor J. Clark.

Be pleased with nought that displeases God.
Return in justice what has been borrowed for convenience.

It is often easier to do than to undo.
A showy religion may only be a sham religion.
Sinning should be dreaded more than suffering.
God has married privilege and duty together, let not man put them asunder.

He that is poorest has least to loose.
Lasting pleasure is not found anywhere on Satan's ground.

God is love, and God is light.
Daily live as in His sight,

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