



The Good News

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Laboring in the Work of the Lord

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Tomorrow is a national holiday known as “Labor Day”. To quote the Wikipedia page, “it honors the American labor movement and the contributions that workers have made to the strength, prosperity, laws, and well-being of the country”. It has been a national holiday since 1894. Therefore, it seems appropriate that we consider today what it means to labor in the work of the Lord. We often stress the importance of laboring in the work of the Lord on an individual basis. We often encourage each other to set a goal to invite people in our lives to worship services or to a Bible study. However, it is easy to set a difference in our minds between what our personal work is versus the work of the local church. It is important that we understand that our personal works are directly related to the work of the local church. Consider with me the following points concerning how personal work directly impacts the work of the church.

Good works are commanded by God, to individuals and to churches – Eph. 2:10, I Thess. 1:3, II Thess. 1:11-12 – It is understood that there are limits of authority as to what a church can do collectively versus what an individual can do, as in the case of institutionalism. However, the brethren (as individuals and as collective members of a local congregation) are to be consistently engaging in “good works”. These good works are not defined as simply “good deeds”, but rather God-authorized actions and conduct designed specifically to increase the spiritual awareness of others.

The burden of responsibility is not to be placed on others – It is easy to think that the burden of “good works” can be placed on the preacher, elders, deacons, or just someone else in the congregation. Some Christians have the concept that the preacher is there to do those good works that everyone else is too busy to do. This is nonsense and false. The Bible teaches that good works are the responsibility of all, regardless of what job they have. When a preacher or elder engages in a good work, should they be required to do so as a preacher or el-

der or can they be allowed to do so simply as a Christian? Furthermore, to place the burden of responsibility on the preacher or elders is to do no different than what members of the Catholic church did for centuries. When an indulgence was bought, it was with the concept that the burden of good works was now transferred from the purchaser to the members of the clergy. The individual who bought the indulgence could then proceed in good conscience knowing that good works would be done on their behalf without them physically having to do anything. There are those in the church of Christ that believe firmly that they “pay” the preacher to do their work for the Lord. This is also nonsense and false. The Bible teaches that preachers are to do the work of the Lord because they want to do so, not because they want to be paid for it. A congregation can choose to support that effort or not, but it does not mean that the burden of responsibility changes in any way.

Ultimately, the success or failure, growth or decline, of a congregation does not hinge solely on the work of the preacher, or even on the work of elders. Rather it is a collective effort, with the labor of elders, preachers, deacons, class teachers, parents, teenagers, children, the elderly, and other members that bring about growth. As Paul said in **Eph. 4:16**, true growth and success requires that “*every part does its share*”. This means that all members are actively seeking ways to further the work of the Lord, in teaching others and edifying one another. As a congregation, they are collectively relying on the authority of the Scriptures for what the church can and cannot do, and are busy looking for ways within the authority of God to further the teaching of the Gospel. Therefore, let us actively seek ways to increase the spiritual awareness of others, both as individuals and as a collective group of God’s people. Let us understand that the responsibility of work belongs to each of us equally, and so let “*every part*” do “*its share*” so that we may all help further the work of the Lord.