

Seven Lessons for Christian Workers

Introduction

Welcome to a special holiday edition of My Thoughts as we celebrate Labor Day. So, how did this holiday come about? On September 5, 1882, New York's Central Labor Union organized a celebration for all of their members and families.

The celebration gained in popularity over the following twelve years, 30 states recognized Labor Day as an official holiday. In 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed into Law the recognition of Labor Day as a federal holiday and designated the observance on the first Monday in September. The holiday does not have the fanfare it once had. Now we use Labor Day as the "unofficial end of summer."

Labor Day for the Christian Worker

Let us look at the Christian worker. Many Christians hold down a secular job. They also work within their churches, mostly as volunteers, conducting Bible studies for children, teenagers, young and older adults, kitchen workers during special functions, and planners for upcoming events, just to name a few. They should also be recognized for their tireless efforts in making the Body of Christ a success.

Open your Bibles to our foundation passage for our Labor Day special and turn to the Book of Acts 5:17-39. These verses contain seven important lessons for the Christian worker engaging in God's service. Before considering these, notice one of Luke's favorite words is "**filled.**"

How wonderful it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit! How awful to have Satan filling our hearts! How dangerous it may be to be filled with indignation! How glorious to be filled with the knowledge of Christ and His saving power. Indignation (v. 17) means, "the feeling, characterized by, or expressing strong displeasure at something considered unjust, offensive, or insulting."

1. Whenever God is Truly Working, Satan Will Also be at Work

Acts 5:17-18, "**Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.**"

We read about these bold servants of the Lord Jesus Christ experiencing tremendous persecution, but what we want to notice particularly is that behind their persecution was Satan himself. A great work of God was going on, so Satan was on the warpath, as he always is when God works. If God is doing something, look out for Satan!

It's a fact, that the more determined we are to pray, preach the gospel, and glorify God, the more we face Satan, and the more we need grace to overcome his devastating work. So, do not be discouraged if he is giving you a bad time as you serve the Lord.

Some Christians do not have to worry about Satan because they are lukewarm (Revelation 3:16) and half-hearted. In some churches, Satan does not worry much because they are not getting on with the job. Be assured, though, we need not be overcome by Satan. By prayer and with heavenly wisdom we may be **"more than conquerors"** (Romans 8:37); and as we resist Satan, **"he will flee from us"** (James 4:7).

2. It is Always Safe to Trust God When We are Doing His Will

Acts 5:18-19, **"... and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ..."**

There are thousands of Christians in prison today because of who they are in Christ and who have sought to be faithful. God is still able to perform miracles. In this case, **"an angel of the Lord"** came down at His command and broke open the prison doors; just as God sent one of His angels to release Peter from prison in Acts 12:5-16.

The important thing when we are **"in prison"** is to trust the Lord. Psalm 37:5-6, **"Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday."** One missionary who was threatened by a gunman said, "You cannot fire that shot until the God whom I serve gives you permission!" It was similar to the fiery furnace Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego faced in Daniel 3:16-18.

Sometimes, trials of our faith bring more glory to God, blessings to ourselves and to others, so God lets us suffer for a while (Philippians 1:12). It is always safe to trust God! Paul and Silas proved it in Acts 16:19-36 while in the Philippian jail.

3. We May Still Believe in and Rejoice in the Ministry of Angels

Acts 5:19-21, **"But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought."**

The angels were known as **"ministering spirits"** (Hebrews 1:14). Although the angels have a wonderful ministry entrusted to them, we have a far greater ministry. The angels await God's orders, and are ready to do His will, but the angels are not entrusted with the immense privilege of preaching the gospel to sinners.

That ministry is given to us. What a rare privilege for a believer to go to an unbeliever and speak about the Lord Jesus Christ who is able and willing to save all who put their trust in Him!

4. We Should Obey God Rather than Men

Acts 5:29, **“But Peter and the other apostles answered and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”**

It is easy to read these words in verse 29, but it must have taken a great deal of courage for these men to say this. How bold Peter and the others were! In spite of threats of imprisonment, and worse, they were determined to go on preaching the gospel because the Lord had commissioned them to do just that. While they were forbidding Peter to preach, he was preaching to them! If only we had a little more of his courage, tenacity, and concern for the lost!

The next two lessons for Christian workers come from Acts 5:32, **“And we are these witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”**

5. God Gives the Holy Spirit to Those Who Obey Him

Notice these two principles in verse 32:

- When an unbeliever repents and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, God gives him the Holy Spirit. In other words, when we obey the gospel, the Holy Spirit is given to us (Acts 2:37-39).
- As believers, surrendering to Jesus in complete obedience, He fills and empowers us with the Holy Spirit. The measure in which God fills and empowers us with the Holy Spirit depends on the measure of our obedience.

6. As Effective Witnesses, We Must Know the Partnership of the Holy Spirit

In verse 32 Peter said, **“We are His witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit.”** Our passage surely is a great lesson of the Book of Acts. A witness is someone who shows Jesus in their lives and talks about Him daily. A witness is a demonstration of Jesus, a sample of the grace of God, and a human illustration of what God can do with anyone.

We must surrender to the Lord all we are and have, but we must receive from the Lord all He offers to us in the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

7. When God Initiates a Work, He Will Prosper, Complete It, and Cannot be Overthrown

Acts 5:38-39, **“And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest you even be found to fight against God.”**

What comfort these verses bring to us! We are reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 16:18, **"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."**

People tell us that the Church is failing, and it will not last much longer. What stupidity! The Lord will not fail as He is the builder. Philippians 1:6, **"... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."**

Conclusion

Acts 5:17-39 details seven lessons we need to read and study to become effective and successful Christian workers. As workers for God, we must follow these lessons, but here are others to follow:

- Requires our service
- To serve even when it is tough
- Not to be disobedient
- If disobedient, repent
- God will help us in service to Him
- God will encourage us
- Give value to our work

Remember, not just have faith in God, but trust Him in all your service to Him. See yourself blessed and prosper as you follow God's plan for you, Amen!

I am Dale Van De Bogart and I fully agree on God's Word!

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