

The Work Imperative

By Mark Mayberry

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Introduction

Communicating the work imperative, Jesus said, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world” (John 9:4-5). According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, when used as an adjective, “imperative” refers to “something of vital importance,” and when used as a noun, it identifies “an essential or urgent thing.”

Work is an imperative, both in the physical affairs of life and also in spiritual activities. Before sin entered the world, work was still important, even in a perfect Edenic environment: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Wise Solomon extolled energetic activity as a rule of success (Eccl. 9:10; 11:6). Paul praised the same spirit of industriousness (Col. 3:22-24; 1 Thess. 4:9-12). Jesus expressed similar thoughts on other occasions, such as His comments to the disciples after speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work” (John 4:31-38), and also in offering up His High Priestly prayer unto the Father just before His betrayal: “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:1-5).

The Work of the Lord

We should abound in the work of the Lord, even when called to serve in some capacity other than that which we might otherwise prefer (1 Chron. 26:29-32). We should abound in the work of the Lord, even when it seems that the cause of truth is doomed and that wickedness is ascendant (Jer. 51:5-10). We should abound in the work of the Lord, even when doing so contradicts commonly accepted, worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 15:50-58).

Conclusion

In Paul’s closing comments to the Corinthians, he praises Timothy, saying, “Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord’s work, as I

also am. So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren" (1 Cor. 16:10-11).

Sources:

Soanes, Catherine and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.