



April 20, 2008

## *Vain Labor?*

The religious organizations around us appeal to people to attend their functions with a variety of things designed to entice and pique interest in their work. These things range from music concerts to carnivals, among other things, to demonstrate the good will of the various churches and to lead others, hopefully, to Jesus. As we turn to the pages of the scriptures we find that the early church did one thing; they taught the Gospel. The simple message was presented, sometimes to large crowds, at other times to smaller gatherings, but always with the purpose of presenting the word of God and only that. The letters Paul wrote to the Corinthians addressed a number of problems that they had based on their misunderstanding of how to behave as Christians and to correct their misapplication of the things they had been taught. Paul encouraged the Corinthians, stating “...*be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” (1 Cor 15.58). Today we find that many perceive the “church” as a social action agency, a recreational center or a means of having a variety of other needs met that may have little to do with building the kind of faith that one should have. When we try to share the Gospel with others we may be discouraged at the lack of results as others listen and go on their way without giving needed attention to their spiritual welfare. The Lord’s church may not be seen as very appealing to others when they find that we do not engage in, nor employ, the tactics of other organizations. The plain simple truth of the Bible becomes lost on ears that cannot hear the message their soul needs to pay heed to. I have heard it stated over the years that knocking on doors or trying to teach others is becoming more difficult and some have stopped trying in the wake of religious error that has blinded the minds of many. This is the same situation that the early church faced as they taught those of a Jewish heritage who were caught up in their traditions and the gentile pagans who, for the most part, undoubtedly saw the teaching of the Gospel as not very enticing

when compared to what they could enjoy in their religions. We need to remember that the word of God is as powerful today as it was in the first century but it has to be put to use. During the days of Noah, only he and his family were delivered from the flood as no one else listened to the voice of God. The history of the world is that mankind tends to favor the things of the world in exchange for what God has to say. Most folks believe in what they can personally experience and look for the good that religion can do for them and not what they need to do in service to God. These pressures over the years have caused divisions and some have fallen away from the truth in order to achieve greater results. Isaiah recorded what God had to say about this when he wrote, “*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*” (Isa 55.11). We need to look for and utilize every opportunity to teach others regardless of how we think they might react to what we have to say. As the apostle Paul pointed out to the Corinthians, “*So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*” (1 Cor 3.7). The problem that arises is that some have given up planting the seed and watering the interest that arises when the situation presents itself. Those in the early church realized that the mission of Christians was to teach the word and they did so in all places they went (Acts 8.4). God’s word remains the manifestation of the Lord’s power to save (Rom 1.16) and will do so if it is put to use. True faith is exhibited when one decides to teach the word and only the word as God has commanded. Many times we may not see the results. It may take many years in the hearts and minds of some before they turn to God, but that day will never come if they are never taught.

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