

seems that we mourn almost as those who have no hope.

Let's lift our eyes. Let's look to the Lord. Let's get excited about seeing Him face to face and living in His love forevermore.

The children of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years when they could have made the trek in a few weeks. Why? Because they grumbled and complained at a grumpy God? Hardly! Rather, in their hearts they were discontent and unthankful to the God of love who was seeking for them the best they could be given. By their discontent and unthankfulness, they shut the door on what He would have given them. As a result all but Caleb and Joshua died in the desert when they could have lived in the land of milk and honey. What was the problem at its heart? They mistrusted God!

Is your tongue thankful? Is your heart content with what God dishes out to you? If not, look out!

*"Without faith it is impossible to please Him."*  
Hebrews 11:6

This faith is not of our working. It is His gift. It is trust that rests quietly, dependently on what He has done and is doing as adequate for all our needs.

The utmost in personal responsibility, submission, and dependence on God is to have quiet confidence in Him. I trust Him to work. I get out of His way and wait contentedly for Him to tell me when He wants me to do something, what He wants me to do, and how He wants me to do it.

God continues to show us His way more perfectly. As we go on, we may see things differently. I learn it is not important that I worship God after any particular fashion, as I once thought it was, only that I respond appropriately to the wonder of who He is. I realize it is not important that my love for Him be deeply felt, only that I respond to His love working in me with a desire to give myself to Him and to please Him. I discover it is not so much that I seek Him, but that I respond to Him as He seeks me out for Himself. I recognize that is not so much that I come to Him, but that I respond as He comes to me.

At last I may understand that all of my activity must succumb to His activity and I become only the re-

ipient and the channel. As much as there is to learn, if I will but abide in Him, comfortable with His doing, increasingly willing to respond with all His enabling to all He does, everything else will follow.

Let's build our lives on our Lord and on the truth that He is in us performing all that is necessary for our eternal benefit. We are in Him where we can live confidently, contentedly at home, assured He is always doing His all-sufficient work on our behalf. We can rest content in the divine reality that He is in us, working His divine transformation.

He is working in us even the capacity to rest and trust in Him, to remain or abide in Him, to contentedly accept His working, even His causing us to will and to do of His good pleasure. True, often we are not very aware that it is occurring. Still, we can know it is because He says so. What release! What joy! What life!

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# Thoughts on Christ at Work

By: Pastor Ron Marr

*"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." Philippians 1:6*

I find everywhere in Christendom works! Not His work, but ours. Not quiet neediness of Spirit, but our accomplishment. Not rest in His life, but striving in ours, sometimes even under the guise of its being His.

One of the worst works errors is the demand that we change, that we decide for Christ, that we obey God, that we have faith in Him, that we will to please Him, even that we bring ourselves to the place of letting God's life replace ours, His peace and rest replace our striving. We cannot. He can and must at His pace, in His way, in His time. We must rather look to Him in anticipation of His doing it, and wait restfully, peacefully, and meekly for Him to do so, rather than try to force it on ourselves.

Nonetheless, in order for Him to do His work in us, we must respond to our Lord's life-long love call. The chief factor in spiritual stagnation may be that we do not seek Him first, and as a result, we do not find Him and with Him the all He offers us. There are too many other things first for us, and they are all idols replacing God.

By holding out on the Lord, by preferring our idols to Him, we limit what He can do in, for, and through us. We limit the free flow of His life in us. God help us to have no confidence in the flesh. Then His life will flow in us, as we have no other. How delightful!

It is neither our responsibility to originate the desire nor provide the capacity to be conformed to His image. It is our responsibility to let Him unstop the

## THOUGHTS ON CHRIST AT WORK

blockages so His life can flow freely in us by exposing ourselves to the cleansing of His Word and His Spirit; letting go, as He enables, of all the blockages of self, rights, possessions, and control; letting Him reveal our need and Himself our all-sufficient supply; and letting Him teach us to come to Him, trust Him, rest content in Him, and depend on Him for all things.

The Spirit of God alone can work the work of God in our hearts and lives. He alone can make God real, living, personal, and vital to us. Only He can work the transformation in our hearts and lives. He alone can make it possible for us to live in intimate fellowship with the Lord. He, as God, makes the Christianity we profess really work.

But let's not be confused. Merely having correct doctrine about the work of God and His Spirit is not enough. We need to know the Spirit Himself, real, personal, living, and active. Just knowing about God is of little value if we do not know, trust and rely on Him as He is. Let's release all else, even our supposed knowledge of Him, to receive Him and from Him as He is.

We will benefit greatly if, early on in our communion with God, we recognize that our minds, hearts, and attitudes are filled with misperceptions that severely cripple us. Recognizing their presence and longing to have them corrected is a part of the humility without which growth in our relationship with the Lord can't occur.

Meditating on God and His truth impacts our misperceptions of reality, including our misperceptions of God. See Psalm 1:1-2 and Psalm 119. As the Spirit uses the Word to correct our misperceptions, we'll see Him more nearly as He really is with both our minds and our spirits. This in turn will lead us to respond to Him more appropriately.

In turn, these right responses will work to correct our attitudes and actions not only toward Him but toward ourselves, others, and all things.

We want to recognize and live without undue discouragement with the reality of our continuing re-

bellion, resistance, and resentment toward God and His control of our lives. But we must be sure there isn't the least acceptance or approval of either our sinfulness or our acts of sin. Rather, we must long for more deliverance from them. Looking to the Lord alone as our hope, we can live in quiet confidence in Him to do the transforming work.

Our whole Christian walk is based on basic trust in God. We must never find Him less than entirely trustworthy in all circumstances, no matter how hurtful, frightening, desperate, long continued, and impossible they may appear, or how silent God may seem to be.

When there's nothing to do and no place to go, just trust Him. If it seems you can't trust because you're too hurt, too worn out, too scared, too whatever, tell him you feel like you can't trust Him, but there's just nothing else for you to do. Just lay down in His arms, and let Him hold you tight. If you don't feel like it, if you try to trust Him and rest in Him and you can't, just stop and offer Him the little trust you have. Even if it is only mistrust, offer it to Him, and stop your struggling.

I am increasingly conscious of the awful threat to our entire Christian walk, and especially to the transformation of our character into the likeness of our Lord's, posed by our terrible prideful desire to control. Husbands want to control wives, wives to control husbands, both to control children, and children to control parents. We all want to set the other guy straight. No one will accept the obvious fact that others will act the way they will act, and nothing can be done to change it.

Both want to be in charge. Neither wants to back off and let God be in charge. But that is the only way to get along with people and yourself, for that matter. Let God be in charge.

Until we reach the place of brokenness before the Lord, our capacity to surrender to Him is limited. Our independent spirit must be broken, our inner willfulness, pride, and self-dependence. Until it is, there will be more of superficiality and pretense than there will be of reality about any claim to living in resignation to His will. Nor is there really a thing we can do about it but ask Him for willingness to give Him permission to do the breaking.

Remember the horse. He is broken to the saddle and the bridle. His independent will is broken so he may be a contented and useful companion and help to his master.

To take up your cross is to live in subjection to God rather than to your independent self. It is to live by what He wants, not from the external demand and pressure of the law, but from an inner drawing of love, not with clenched teeth because you have to, but from humble trust in God who asks nothing of you that is not the very best for you.

Scripture repeatedly shows that we are to expect to suffer for Christ's sake so long as we live in this world. It shows the benefits received by those who suffer.

A great deal of our problem is that we are not willing to suffer. I have written more than once in my prayer journal, "Struggling with accepting what He has for me of pain today," or "Struggling again. Realized I wasn't content to accept all He sends as good for me."

We are afraid, afraid of pain, afraid of trouble, afraid of losing what we have, afraid of inadequate supply to meet our needs, afraid of what people think of us, afraid of making mistakes and suffering the difficult results. Paul, on the other hand, looked at "the fellowship of His [Christ's] sufferings" as a vital part of knowing Christ.

If the Lord goes with me into the suffering, if He tailors it to meet my need to know Him better, if He will comfort and hold me, if He will enable me not so much to feel the suffering as to see Him better in it, then can't I put my fears aside in favor of simply trusting and worshiping Him, relaxing into His love rather than being terrorized by my pain and fear?

So long as I have other wants than Him, even if it is just to be comfortable, I will continue to struggle. What I want is what I worship. May I find myself set free from my fears by wanting only Him, worshiping only Him. May I want above all else that He be fully my God.

Here on earth, we have no continuing city. This is not our home. Placing no significant value on the temporal and physical, only on the eternal and spiritual, we look forward to our future home.

We claim to be citizens of that heavenly city, yet we think little of it. Sermons on it seem so rare. Our conversations seem almost deliberately to exclude it. While it may not be quite true, it sometimes