

## God Has Work For You

I always enjoy reading books or hearing of stories of men of God. I am always encouraged to see how God used ordinary men mightily for his Glory. But sometimes I do forget that these men are ordinary, as in human, I used to sometimes feel they were made of some special holy dust and set apart uniquely. I have looked to some of these men with jealousy and wished, 'if only God could use me in such a way'.

Today's message, I hope will be an encouragement and a reminder that *God has work for **you** to do.*

Our text for today will be **1Corinthians 3v1-15** and the title is '**God Has Work For You**'. This passage starts with Paul rebuking immature believers for looking to man, resulting in jealousy. Paul goes on to direct the believers to seeing the work of God and the part the believer plays (fellow workers). This passage also deals with the Quality of our work here on earth and reminds us of who we are accountable to.

Before we read 1 Corinthians 3v1-15. I'd like to some how put things into perspective by talking about men of God that were not in the Bible with remarkable stories briefly.

### **Smith Wigglesworth**

Mighty healing ministry

### **Heavenly Man**

Faced deep persecution in China. Scaled walls, fasted for about 72 days in Prison. Walked out of prison unharmed.

### **Martin Luther King**

Stood up against racism and oppression and convicted America of her great injustices at the cost of his life.

### **Tommie Titcombe**

I recently read a book called Tread Upon the Lion about a missionary that came to Africa around 1908-1930 as a missionary. His name was Tommie Titcombe.

He was born in Swindon, which is not to far from Bristol in west England. He later travelled to Canada. One day after receiving a message about going out into the world preached by another

missionary Tommie felt God was calling him to Africa. He was told he could not survive in Africa as many missionaries in that period had made futile attempts but had died, mainly due to sickness. But feeling strongly about God's call on his life he finally made it to West Africa and travelled to the Yagba land in Nigeria. Being white the Yagba people were frightened of him (this was not too long after slavery). He was struggled with surviving the weather as well as struggling to communicate in a different language. He also faced opposition from the village chief as well as the local witch doctor who tried to poison him on several occasions. He persevered and travelled to many villages amongst the Yagba people treading places where the gospel had never been preached. He preached of a loving God who wanted to save man kind, prior to that the Yagba people were very superstitious and believed God, 'Olorun' was a distant entity whereas 'Esu', the devil, was much closer. Animal sacrifices were common to appease the gods. Tommie Titcombe facing all this pressed on to spread the Gospel and began to see many new converts come to the Lord. This of course came with persecution. There was even a time when he entered a town to see a large crowd gathered around some masquerades. The masquerades were dancing around a young girl who was hovering about 2 feet over the ground unconscious... But through this thick darkness he entered with the light of Christ. To cut a long story short many thousands of new believers were birthed through his ministry, many new churches and hospitals were built, and many new missionaries were sent. Due to this mans simple obedience to the Lord many were delivered from the powers of darkness not only in his generation but also in the generations after. As the heart of his work was birthed in the village I was born in, "Egbe", I myself am a fruit of his labour.

All these men were ordinary men walking with an extra ordinary God. Now I have sighted these examples of men of God just to put into perspective what Paul was talking about in the passage that we are about to read.

### **1Corinthians 3v1-15**

1Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 4For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

5What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? **Only servants**, through whom you came to believe—as **the Lord has assigned to each his task**. 6I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, **who makes things grow**. 8The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to **his own labor**. 9For we are God's **fellow workers**; you are God's field, God's building.

10By the **grace** God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But **each one should be careful how he builds**. 11For no one can lay any **foundation** other than the one already laid, which is **Jesus Christ**. 12If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, **13his work will be shown for what it is**, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be **revealed with fire**, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

### **Following mere men**

Verse 1–4 show Paul rebuking the immature believers. It seems there was jealousy and quarrelling among them. I'm not sure of what topics they argued about but this text lets us know the main reason for quarrel was because some said "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos". It seems amongst the Christians they began to have fan clubs.

One would say "Appolos has got bare power when he's talking, man that guys on fire, unlike Paul he just sounds big in his letters"

Another guy would say "Naa brov, its all about Paul, He's been doing his ting from time, he had a live vision, does Appolos even dream?"

Why were these believers behaving in a worldly manner. They had placed mere men on a pedestal. The Bible tells us to esteem each other above ourselves but it doesn't say we should place men on such a Godlike pedestal. They may have heard the news of the works Paul had been doing. This man was stoned but he survived, his ship crashed but he survived, a poisonous snake bit him but he shook it off and survived, After persecuting the

church He had a vision with Christ, and survived. His shadow was healing people. Why wouldn't they believe there was something super special about these guys. Put Paul rebukes them for thinking like mere men, for being worldly. You see previously in the book of **Acts 14v8–20** the people of Lystra had tried to turn him into a godlike figure with Barnabas after they witnessed a healing.

**8** In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.

**9** He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed

**10** and called out, Stand up on your feet! At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

**11** When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, **The gods have come down to us in human form!**

**12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes** because he was the chief speaker.

**13** The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

**14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting:

**15 Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.**

**16** In the past, he let all nations go their own way.

**17** Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.

**18** Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

**19** Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

**20** But after the disciples had gathered round him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

no wonder Paul calls these believers worldly. They were behaving like men who didn't know the source of all power and the source of everything Good. They were still looking to men, as if there was anything good in a mere man. I can picture Paul passionately saying to the believers with the same passion he displayed at Lystra **"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task"**

### **Playing your part in God's Work**

Paul goes on to explain to the believers that he and Appolos are only "servants". He wants to let them know he was assigned a task by God and is simply playing his part. He also wants them to know that God uses believers in various ways for **His ONE** work. When Paul says **5What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6I planted the seed, Apollos**

watered it, but **God made it grow**. 7So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to **his own labor**. 9For we are God's **fellow workers**; you are God's field, God's building.

Paul wants it to be known that God gets the glory. It important that we maintain an attitude of humility when God is using us lest we make men think it is our strength and worse still, deceive ourselves into thinking it is our strength. In verse 10 it says “ **By the grace God has given me I laid the foundation as an expert builder**”. The word grace means unmerited favour, it is not because he is special that he is an Apostle but it is by grace. He doesn't plant the seed because he learned the art of seed planting rather God gave him the ability as a gift and assigned him his role as a seed planter. This also shows us that God asks us to do a task but also equips us to complete the task. He uses the analogy of a plant. One man plants the seed another waters it, but the supernatural part is that it grows.

God has called us to be “fellow workers” with Him. This means we actively participate in the work He is doing. For example the Bible says it is the Spirit that draws a man to Christ. Should I then say because it's the Holy Spirit that draws men to Christ I shouldn't evangelise. No. God is saying you go preach (sow the seed), I'll do the job of making it grow. It is a partnership. We offer ourselves to him as his servants so that his will shall prevail.

This passage also highlights the ‘togetherness’ of God's work. One man sows another man waters and God makes it grow. These immature believers were basically supporting one side so much that they were disregarding the ministry of the other. They both needed each other to function harmoniously. If the evangelist brings people to the church but the teacher refuses to teach them, the seed may not have the opportunity to grow. And if the seed doesn't grow, how is God glorified in our labour?

It's important for every single one of us to play our part in God's body. He has entrusted everyone of us with gifts and abilities for his glory. You may think small me, I haven't got much to offer. But God requires you to plant the small seed he gave you to make it grow. You don't have to worry about it growing, He will do that. It is your job to do as He has asked you to do and play

**your** part. It is important to play your part and not someone else's part. "The Lord has assigned to **each** his task".

*I was reading a book recently about Spiritual gifts and remember an analogy that was drawn. The analogy was of a man who was an evangelist all his life. He organised crusades here there and everywhere. But when he got to heaven God asked him where are the thousands of employees you were supposed to have to make money to feed the poor. Or perhaps an accountant who helped churches with there accountants, but on the day of judgement God asks him, where are the thousands of Souls you were supposed to bring to me though your crusades.*

What part are you supposed to be playing? Are you walking on the right road? Or is the path your walking on full of selfish ambitions?

In our home group meeting we were discussing the works of the flesh. And a friend was talking about how we often squeeze God into fitting out personal ambitions. For example, one might have an ambition to be famous. God then calls this person to an evangelical ministry. But rather than being faithful to what God has called him to do, he must get on TV at all cost to be a televangelist. When he is caught between saving a soul or being on TV he will choose the TV.

As Christians we must die to the old nature. Less of me more of Him. This means we must also die to our ambitions. His ambition must be our ambition.

### **The Quality of your Work**

We have seen that it is God that does the real work but we participate. Though we are mere men God has assigned us a task to perform. If we do our part he does His part. But Paul doesn't stop there, he offers another warning "but each one should be careful how he builds".

Why should I be careful how I build or how I serve God? Isn't it enough that I am already serving him? We need to be reminded that we are not serving an earthly King but the King of Kings. It is important we examine our motives to ensure our work is of the highest quality.

For example Bob is walking down the street and sees a hungry man begging for money. He wants to keep his money for himself but as an attractive Christian sister whom he likes is watching, he decides to reach for his wallet and give some money. Perhaps to look caring.

Another guy called Bob, in the same situation sees the hungry man. He too wants to keep his money for himself but decides he must help this needy man out of compaction.

Both Bobs did the same thing outwardly but God's inspection transcends the natural and delves deep into our inner man.

The quality of your work will be tested. Anything not built on the foundation of Christ will not stand, good or bad. God is not interested in the work you initiate whether it's good or not, He is only interested in the work He initiates. He is not looking for good or bad but for Christ.

Tommie Titcombe speaking to an audience of 3000 and imploring them to do the work of God said -

*"One recognizes that the greatest events of the Christian world do not come from much talking or dramatic preparation: they come when men adjust to God's plans".*

God's will is what matters. Are you aware that you will be judged as a Christian? Leonard Ravenhill once said *"You will give account for every penny you earned"*. We need not fear hell, for there is no condemnation for the saints, neither are we saved by works but buy grace for works. Not Only does God require us to do his work but he will also test how well we fulfilled our commission. All works will be tested by fire.

10By the **grace** God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But **each one should be careful how he builds**. 11For no one can lay any **foundation** other than the one already laid, which is **Jesus Christ**. 12If any man builds on this foundation using **gold, silver, costly stones**, wood, hay or straw, **13his work will be shown for what it is**, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be **revealed with fire**, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

What does fire represent? Fire can either destroy or refine a thing.

Have you noticed the order in Which Paul presents the materials? He lists 6 types of materials in order of quality. The first three

are Gold, Silver and precious stones, these are elements that are refined by fire, the last three 'wood, hay and straw' are things that easily go up in flames.

Leonard Ravenhill once said "a lot of public ministries will go up in flames on that day".

You see we may be inclined into doing the outwardly wonderful things. Ravenhill compared these many outward things we do that appear good to wood, hay and straw. These are things you readily see above the ground unlike Gold, Silver and precious stones which are elements often found under ground. There is a lot of secret work, which we ignore. We want to pray for long periods publicly but ignore praying in our closet.

Only what God has built will survive. We must build on the foundation of Christ and not on the foundation of men or selfish agendas. As believers we must continuously strive to know God's will and to be obedient.

### **The Purpose of Salvation**

Ephesians 2:8-10

**8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**9** not by works, so that no-one can boast.**10** For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

That means God has pre-prepared works for us to do. If His purpose in your salvation was simply to save you from hell, He could zap us straight away. God wants to express himself through your life. He already has his blue print and is waiting for you to play your part.

Stop looking at other men in amazement. How does he pray like that, or look at the power he has to heal, what an awesome man of God, look at his missionary journeys. Let us not act like immature believers looking to man and not the God behind the man. **God has work for you**, and he has equipped you with every gift and ability required in Christ, for you to play your part in His One work.

Let us pray for God to renew our mind and direct our hearts after Him. That we may live our lives for him, doing works of Gold which he pre ordained for us.