

Success in The Lord's Work

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The two elements involved in success in the Lord's work are seen in the following statement from Paul, the apostle:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Note these elements:

- 1) A singularity of purpose to grow, go forward, progress, and abound in spiritual activity.
- 2) The need to let our work be governed by the Lord.

Unfortunately, we have not always recognized the implications of these two elements. The following have occurred to me in thinking about this important subject.

Neither a Christian nor a church can grow while he or it is content to sit in idleness, but lamentably, this seems to be the only trait in which many of us are steadfast and unmovable. I am sure that if the truth were revealed many of the Lord's churches would be seen to be in the throes of mediocrity, perfectly content with the status quo. Thus, we pride ourselves on being "average" Christians, having "average" contributions. (maybe even more than "Lazy Hollow" church across town), having "average" attendance, in short, being an "average" (sometimes even "better than average") church or Christian. Many obviously have not yet been informed that to be average means we are just as close to the bottom as we are to the top! The bad thing about this state of affairs, as I see it, is not so much that it exists now, but that it has come to be a way of life and too many are content for it to exist—*indefinitely*. When someone suggests some means to improve on the situation, he is as likely to be restrained as to be encouraged.

Occasionally, there may be a valid reason for not attempting a given work or plan. These are understandable. It seems that often, however, the same time-worn excuses are encountered. After you hear them enough you unconsciously memorize some of them: "We have never tried that here before" (usually good reason for trying it now); "We know someone (always unnamed) who would object"; or simply, "That's not necessary—it wouldn't do any good" (the epitome of open-mindedness). Where such reactions are frequently registered, there is little, if any, way for that group to ever abound, much less be always abounding. If such expressions do not enthrone tradition, I do not know how it could be done. We should not be afraid of any

Scriptural expedient for growing and abounding. We don't deserve any success if we are afraid of it.

Of course, our work must be governed by the Lord in his Word. If our labor is "not in vain" in the Lord, it surely is in vain if not in the Lord. The Lord is the one who must be in control. We should therefore care more for His approval than for that of any man or woman or group of them. Who is really in control of the church where one family or very few families can negate a whole program of work or set of policies? A program of work is suggested; it is admittedly good and needed; the elders arrive at a decision, after anxious stares at one another; finally, one finds the words, "We think it would be a good work, but some would object and criticize so we had better not try it. After all, we must not offend anyone, or they might stop attending worship." When such a consideration can determine policy and work, the wrong driver is "behind the wheel." Such a practice is to allow small men to cast large shadows – always a very dangerous occurrence. It is my conviction that the scriptures teach us that the first consideration of any work should be, "Is this a good work – will it please the Lord?" If it is and you can do it, then let the critics and objectors howl and let the devil take the hindmost. We must operate and act to please the Lord. If we are not in business to please him first, we are in the wrong business! If in doubt about this principle, read Gal. 1:10. What if a few do "swell up" and leave because they didn't get their way. I never knew a congregation that was hurt by such an exodus.

There can never be any measurable success achieved in our Lord's work until we inculcate these two basic elements: the desire to abound and the courage to do the Lord's will, despite the critics.

[Note: I wrote this MS for and it was published in the September 1969, edition of Action, ed. Jimmy Lovell, Redondo Beach, CA.]

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