

"The Night Cometh"

by Bill Crews

"We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work," said Jesus in John 9:4.

"What was true of Him and His disciples is true of every man -- it is necessary for each one to work the works of God during the "day" of his life, for the "night" of death is coming upon him when he cannot do any of these works. Let us emphasize three points from the Lord's statement:

The fact that we must work. We are not just accidents in an unplanned and accidental universe. We are a part of a divine creation; we are creatures of God. We are not here solely through the actions of our parents or solely through physical laws of procreation. We are here by the grace of God and according to the laws that God authored. We are here with purpose, not without purpose. We are here to show the wisdom and power of God, to glorify God, to do the will of God. We are here to work, both physically and spiritually, and equipped to do that work. "We must work."

What we must work. Jesus said, "the works of him that sent me." He was to do, and did do, what the Father sent Him to do (Jn. 4:34; 6:38; 17:4; 19:30). We are to do what God has revealed that He wants us to do (please read Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Acts 10:35; Micah 6:8). All else in life is subservient to and is to serve this end. Getting an education, caring for the body, securing and maintaining a secular job, establishing a home, etc. Above the necessities of life we are to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33). We are to set our minds upon and to seek the things that are above more than the things that are here on earth (Colossians 3:1-2). We are to love Christ more than we love father or mother, son or daughter, husband or wife (Matthew 10:37). We are to be sure that the "one thing that is needful" takes precedence over all other things (Luke 10:41-42). Where are we putting the emphasis? Body or soul? Flesh or spirit? Outward man or inward man? Earth or heaven? Material things or spiritual things? Time or eternity? This life or the life to come? Christ will not accept second place.

When we must work. Jesus said, "while it is day." This life is our "day" of responsibility and opportunity. Only in it can we work the works of God or any other works, and the works of God we must work. Only in it can we accept the grace of God, take advantage of the mercy of God, make ourselves right with God, and prepare ourselves for the judgment and eternity. And our "day" of life, at most, is brief and always uncertain. This earthly life is likened to a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6), to a running messenger (Job 9:25), to a swift sailing ship (Job 9:26), to a flower (Job 14:2; 1 Peter 1:24), to a shadow (Job 14:2), to a vapor (James 4: 14). And because it is, we must be certain that we are really doing the works of God now.

When we cannot work. Jesus said, "for the night cometh, when no man can work." He was, of course, referring to the "night" of death. Thomas Carlyle had these words inscribed upon his pocket watch, so that every time he looked at that watch to see what time it was he would be reminded of the approach of death and the importance of each moment. Sir Walter Scott had these words inscribed upon the face of his sun dial. Death is certain ("it is appointed unto man once to die" --Hebrews 9:27; "the living know that they must die"--Ecclesiastes 9:5) and nearly always unexpected, and too often feared and unwelcome. It can come so swiftly and without warning, but it is so final. It takes us from the stage of this life, a stage to which we cannot return. It brings the curtain down on the grace, mercy, and longsuffering of God. For some it will be "gain" (Philippians 1:21); for others only loss. For some welcomed release and rest; for others dread and fear. For some it will be joyful (2 Timothy 4:6-8); for others too late. Read about the rich man in Luke 16: 19-31, the foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, the one-talent servant in Matthew 25:14-30. After death came, after the bridegroom returned, after the master came back, it was too late. Our Lord, by these lessons He taught, is pleading with you and me and saying, "Don't let this happen to you!"

Jesus was successful. He truly worked the works of the Father Who sent Him in the "day" of His brief life and before the "night" of His death came. Will we follow His example?

254002