

## THE WORK OF GOD

**“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:29)**

There is an old story about the man with a beautiful garden. The soil had been tilled and fertilized, and straight rows planted. It was also well watered and all the noxious weeds had been removed. Someone said: “God has certainly given you a beautiful garden”. The man replied: “You should have seen it when God had it all to himself”. Man obviously has some part to play in growing a beautiful garden. It has been so from the very beginning. Adam, as you know, was placed by God in the Garden of Eden to dress and keep it (Gen. 2:15).

Among many other analogies, the church is called “God’s husbandry” or “God’s field” (1 Cor. 3:9). This same verse states that we are laborers together with God. Our text reminds us that one aspect of our “labor” or “work” is to “believe” on Jesus.

At first glance this seems incongruous. We normally contrast faith and work. We usually think of them as totally different. Our text, however, beckons us to reassess our thoughts. Biblical faith is not some warm fuzzy feeling, it is work. Biblical faith is not a hunch or suspicion, it is work. Saving faith is not a nebulous whim conjured up in a moment of inspiration, it is work. The weight of this work must be carried personally. You cannot delegate this “work” to another and expect to be saved.

Let us use the story of Jacob to illustrate the the “work” of “saving faith”. Jacob’s father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham, both lied about their wives (Gen. 12:13; 26:7). We should not be surprised, therefore, that Jacob was also a liar (Gen. 27:19 - 24). There was, however, a core belief in Jacob that twenty years later would literally transform his life. As we list some milestones in this long process, please do not lose sight of the fact that at every step of the way Jacob was working out his own salvation.

- Early in the process Jacob received his brother’s birthright and blessing (Gen. 25; 27). The profound implications of this must have weighed heavily on Jacob’s mind ever day.
- At Bethel God made promises to Jacob, and Jacob made promises to God (Gen. 28).
- In Padam Aram Jacob worked hard, but Laban changed his wages ten times. During the long difficult days and sleepless nights Jacob’s faith was being “worked out” and forged in a furnace of affliction (Gen. 31:38 - 42).
- Jacob’s return to the Promised Land is an eloquent testimony to his character. His fear of God was greater his fear of Esau.
- At Peniel Jacob saw God “face to face” (Gen. 32:30). Like Christ in Gethsemane he was waging the battle of his life. It is the same classic confrontation that all of us go through in surrendering our own will to God. That struggle is not an easy one! It is work!
- After the encounter was over, Jacob was given a new name, Israel. He had struggled with God and men, and had prevailed. Now God was not only the Sovereign of the universe, He was also the Supreme Ruler of Jacob’s heart and life. No battle in Jacob’s life was more difficult or more important.

This brief survey does not do justice to the “work” involved in twenty years of hardship and difficult decisions. Yes! God was directing the process and knew what would happen before Jacob was even born. It was not God, however, who paid the tithes, said the prayers, endured the hardships, lost the sleep, took the risks, wouldn’t let go, and walked a limp for the rest of his life. We may say with certainty that Jacob’s faith resulted from working the work of God.

But what about you? Every decision that you make either brings you closer to God, or further from Him. Jacob knew better than to lie to his father and steal his brother’s blessing. Had he continued to do such things he could have calloused his heart and perhaps even strayed beyond the reach of redemption (Heb. 6:1 - 6). Fortunately, Jacob made the right choices. He saw in Laban the mirror like image of his own worst behavior. He did not, however, give up and quit. Step by step and day by day he drew closer to his own rendezvous with destiny. Please make the same kinds of principled decisions in your own life, for this is the work of God that you believe on Jesus!