

## We Are Fellow Laborers With God

By Brian Herren

“For we are laborers together with God...” – I Corinthians 3:9

The definition and principles of Zion have oft been given thorough treatment in classes and sermons, identifying the term with God's people (Genesis 7:23; D/C 94:5c). Our pursuit in understanding Zion may be blessed by the simultaneous outreach of our best faculties in daily life. Not leaving those principles expounded upon in good form year by year, one can hardly ignore that these principles demand the just and equal response of every honest man. Understanding a principle makes one accountable for his reaction to such an understanding, which is the underpinning of justice. To be gathered in one and understand the nature of God revealed in the physical expression of His kingdom is not the end of His creation in us, but rather the foundation upon which our continued labor might one day return it's fruit. To build upon the foundation of Christ will require more than an understanding of His doctrine, it will require a dedicated response to that understanding. To our collective mind and righteous desire, we must offer the best of our labor. Those who wait for the kingdom of God will never bear the fruit that is familiar to those who labor daily as citizens.

Men are called to be fellow laborers with God, and once freed from the bondage of selfishness, they find their most complete satisfaction in the fulfillment of this commission. It is tempting to the man of God, one who wholly recognizes God's omnipotence and majesty, to defer all sense of obligation upon this earth to the One who ultimately has power over it. Such temptations must be dismissed in the acknowledgment of our present mission. Men were not created to receive the uncertain ends of a passive existence. They were placed upon this earth in the very likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), whose works are without end (D/C 22:23), to improve their estate daily through submission and obedience to the God who is at all times disposed toward the best interests of His creatures.

Any system of thought that ultimately concludes that man is a passive creature to be acted upon by the forces of the heavens alone, is a system of thought that will leave her adherents complacent, fearful, and superstitious. It is not heretical to suppose that man should labor at the side of God. In fact, it is the perfect acknowledgement of the nature of our creation and the purpose for which we are given any power of Him. If not to labor at His side, to what end are men endowed with any portion of His power? Not only is it acceptable to acknowledge man's call to reform his nature to match the will of God through discipline, it is a partial

denial of God's work and glory to suggest an alternative purpose behind the power invested in us. If the work and glory of God is to bring about the eternal life and salvation of men, it should also be the work and glory of all men who align their purposes with the purposes of God. One might begin this great labor in faith and repentance, turning unto Christ in Whom our only mode of atonement is realized with a brightness of hope, and continue it thereafter by the careful and compassionate observance of His principal mission toward mankind.

We might consider whether we wait for God to command or compel us before we bring about those works we already know to be good, or whether we exercise them of our own free will, being anxiously engaged in the matter, Doctrine and Covenants 58:6c-f:

"...behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good, they shall in nowise lose their reward. But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned."

This year, let our understandings of Zion now yield renewed interest and fervency in those works entrusted to our hands. Let us labor at God's side, along with His angels and the Holy Spirit, by Whom our access to the Divine is administered peaceably and without cost. The spirit of revival will fill the breasts of those willing to embrace this theme, and find them the rightful heirs to the urgency by which godly men have set their hands to the plow in every generation before us.

Should the matters of this world foment resistance to the good will of our present intent, we might remember the following admonition from Luke 14:15-24 :

"And when one of them who sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper and bade many; And sent his servants at supper time, to say to them who were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servants, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring hither the poor, and the maimed, the halt and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. The Lord said unto his servant, Go out into the highways, and hedges, and compel men to come in, that my house may be filled; For I say unto you, That none of those men who were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

Let this year be a year without excuse, a year of sound labor, bringing our bodies into harmony with our understandings...for we are fellow laborers with God. It seems fitting that we remember that when Christ invited us to learn of Him and find rest, He showed us that to do so is not to remove the yoke of labor, but actually to "take my yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:30). We are to be fellow laborers with God.

This year, we have an opportunity to consider how it is that we might serve as a fellow laborer with God in a more focused way: as men, as women, as the younger, as the older, as the head of our homes, as the married, as the unmarried, as those in the priesthood and those not ordained. Every person will find their calling made sure in the labor to which God invites us, and upon which mankind depends. We might also consider those qualities of character that would make us more acceptable as a yoke fellow to Christ: broken hearted and contrite in spirit, steadfast, immovable, fearless, joyful, peaceable, exercising temperance, faithful, hopeful, charitable, meek, tender, resilient, gentle, good, wise, knowledgeable, submissive, enduring, long-suffering, patient, anxiously engaged, forgiving, insightful, surrendering, overcoming, valiant in testimony, uncompromising in truth, bold in the gospel, unashamed of the work, kind, showing good stewardship, of a sound mind, fit in body, uncorrupted, innocent, honest, just, merciful, bridled in tongue, restrained in heart, passionate for the kingdom, giving, without complaint or murmur, sacrificial, compliant, righteous, judging rightly, dependent

on God, trusting, pure, dependable, present in need, absent in gossip, lowly of heart, principled, prone to hard work, permissive of all good works, intolerant of sin, self-examining, motivated, poor in spirit, encouraging, disciplined, prayerful, given to fasting, studious, and resolved. To these we might add many others, but in these we might find a year's worth of study, preaching, and growth. The soul so inclined will find his best efforts in reformation to be the first fruits of that yoke which is sure to make our labor delightful, the honest provision of our foremost covenant, and the rest promised of Christ in the work without end. May God be honored in the year of our Lord, two-thousand and fourteen.