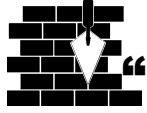


## THE LABORER - “Enlarging God’s Kingdom, Not My Own”



### “Building Blocks”

1. **(Intro Scriptures)** The idea of “righteousness” for American Christians almost always focuses on our standing before God. Partly because of the influence of Paul on our theology but partly because of our self-centered (i.e. individualistic) view of salvation. But for the Jews, “righteousness” was inseparable from how they lived and why. Of the 10 uses of “righteousness” in the Gospels, seven fall from the pen of the writer to the Jews—Matthew.

Also, the “Kingdom of God” was a vital idea to a people once ruled by kings and presently languishing under the thumb of Rome when Jesus was physically present on earth. They understood the “kingdom” in terms of God asserting His rightful role in the affairs of men. “Seeking” these two things (“righteousness” and God’s “kingdom”) would demand that the person would have different motives and allegiance from the world around him/her.

2. **(Q4-Jn 3)** This is a much more profound story than is typically first perceived. Nicodemus is “the” teacher in Israel (Greek has the definite article). Also, by making “rebirth” by the Spirit an entrance requirement into the Kingdom, Jesus effectively eliminated Jewish descent as adequate. This is of enormous significance.
3. **(Q4-Acts 20)** Paul *equates* “the gospel of grace” with “the kingdom” in this statement. In each of these two verses, Paul is the one doing the “preaching,” and his obvious message was that the “good news about grace” was also the news about “the kingdom” having come and being in their midst.
4. **(Q7 - Ecc)** Someone once asked a very wealthy individual, “*How much is enough?*” in regard to his personal wealth. The man’s reply was, “*A little more than I have right now.*” Solomon’s statement here introduces an idea that is very foreign to our normal conversations, but not to our experiences—“financial addiction,” the inability to *not* be accumulating more.
5. **(Q7 - 2 Tim)** The word translated “endure” (NAS, ESV) or “put up with” (NIV) is a very informative word as to what is really happening in the lives of those this verse describes. It literally means to be able “to keep oneself erect/firm beneath” something. In other words, Truth feels like it is crushing these people, so they try to get out from under it by seeking “lighter” Truth!
6. **(Q7 - 1 John)** John’s use of “lust” here is in a negative sense (contextually); a very strong desire emanating from my fallenness (“flesh”) and my lifestyle (“eyes” – what I see). The first is instinctual and the second is more environmental. But both are not only evil in themselves, but their obvious presence and growth in a life calls into question the legitimacy of true Kingdom membership (i.e. genuine rebirth by the Spirit).

The “boasting” John speaks of is from a word that refers to *external* expressions of pride, not merely an attitude of arrogance. The person in this verse is actually *speaking* about things that supposedly “prove” her superiority over others, such as: possessions, knowledge, ancestry, experiences, associations, etc. Anything that comes out of one’s mouth that is intended to make the “playing field” *uneven* is in view here.

7. **(Q10 - vs 11)** We need to be very careful to stay with the context of this verse. Paul *is not* referring to Jesus as the “foundation” as a metaphor for strength and endurance like he does elsewhere (cf. Eph 4:9-16). Here, Paul is addressing the “work” that is done *on top of this foundation*, not the foundation itself. The issue here is whether or not the work done “matches” the foundation. Is it worthy and appropriate or not?



## “Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q2)** We must be careful *not* to totally separate these two commands from each other. In fact, the Kingdom actually advances *via* the transformation of the subjects (i.e. “righteousness”; them “working out their salvation”). Too frequently in our age, we are seeking to advance the Kingdom by *pushing* it forward rather than “working out *our own* salvation.”
2. **(Q3)** Taking Matthew 6:31-33 with Jeremiah 9:23-24, it is safe to say that what we *worry about* and what we boast about are what we are truly seeking, because they reveal what we care about most.
3. **(Q3)** Jesus’ point here *is not* to be careless or care-free; It is to examine *what* was care most about: creature needs or the Kingdom of God.
4. **(Q8 - 1 Chron)** Often we mistakenly think the opposite of “whole-heartedness” is “half-heartedness.” In the Bible, the opposite of having a whole-heartedness is having a “divided heart”; one that is unfaithful to the clear teaching of Deut 6:4-5. The constant struggle of the faithful with this issue is reflected in David’s plea in Psalm 86:11 and God’s promise in Ezekiel 11:19-20. It is caring about *too many of the wrong things*, not caring to little about the right thing.
5. **(Q10)** Given our tendency towards boasting and our flaunting our status (cf. 1 Jn 2:15-17; Gal 1:10), it is a very UNloving thing to create or tolerate a “cult of celebrity” within the Church. There is but one King. The rest are all subjects, and those who serve in leadership in this Kingdom, are “less” than those who don’t!!
6. **(Q11 - 1 Cor 9)** It is a sobering truth that we rarely if ever get to “correct” a poorly or wrongly presented “Gospel.” If I get the message wrong, or my life contradicts it, I may find that I have “inoculated” someone *against* the Gospel rather than merely confused them. Part of our difficulty in the U.S. right now in getting Christians to understand discipleship properly is the fruit of 50 years of “cheap grace” and “dumbed down” evangelism.



## “Going Deeper”

1. **(Abiding Principle)** The speaks of a person’s “mission.” Ask each woman to write-out a 2-3 sentence “Mission Statement” that spells out specifically why they believe they are “here,” and what they believe that are to be doing in the meantime.