

A JOB WITHOUT VACATION

-I. Chris Imoisili

[E-mail: imoisilic@hotmail.com]

Sunday, 28 January 2001

Bible Text

And it came to pass that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee withersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath no where to lay His head. And He said to another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.

- Lk 9:57-62

A young student was asked by her career counsellor to state in a few words the core qualities of her ideal job. Without hesitation, she wrote, "Minimum Work with Maximum Pay." I doubt if most of us will disagree with that! Those of us in paid employment get paid even when we are absent (such as at weekends, vacation, sick days, etc.). Our choice or change of jobs is strongly influenced by such and other considerations.

A job with Christ, on the other hand, is different. It has no weekends or vacations or sick days. It has no opening or closing hours. It is an irreversible commitment, which you can neither modify nor amend. Above all, if you refuse the job when you are offered one, or do it badly or wrongly, you are automatically on Satan's payroll, for as Jesus has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" [Lk 11:23]. Therefore, it is a life-or-death issue which we cannot take lightly for Satan has come to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has come that we might have life and have it more abundantly [Jn 10:10].

In today's lesson, we shall examine the subject of what it means to work for Jesus. Specifically, we shall look at our job description, how to apply for the job, how we are trained, the nature of the job, and the retirement plans. I have de-emphasized the question of remuneration because "the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments" [Eccl. 12:13]. Moreover, salvation is by grace, not by works [Eph. 2:8-9]. But, whether we receive the grace or not depends on what we have done with our job with and for Jesus.

1. The Job

In the words of Jesus, “many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” [Matt. 7:22-23]. As noted earlier, our duty is to fear God and keep His commandments. Nevertheless, we are not justified by works but by faith in Jesus [Gal. 2:16]. That is why Mary, His blessed mother, has told us, “whatsoever *He* saith unto you, do it” [Jn 2:5].

From the Bible text for today’s lesson [Lk 9:57-62], we can put together the content of the job that Jesus is calling us to do:

- (a) to preach the gospel [Matt. 28:19]
- (b) to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us to do God’s work [Matt. 10:8; 1 Cor. 12:3-11, 27-28]
- (c) to exhibit the fruits of holy living [Gal. 5:22-25] because it is by our fruits that we are known [Matt. 7:20]

The three aspects are inter-related. You cannot choose some aspects of the job (like those based on public show of spiritual powers) and ignore the rest (like holy living). “Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” [Matt. 5:48] for He “hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness” [1 Thes. 4:7].

Where is this job located? In our Bible text for today, a certain man told Jesus that he would follow Him “whithersoever Thou goest” [Lk 9:57]. Jesus replied, “the Son of man hath no where to lay His head.” In other words, this job is not located in a glass house in the prestigious business district of a world-famous city. *It is a call to inconvenience, discomfort and persecution* because “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” [Eph. 6:12]. Therefore, the job of following Christ takes us everywhere: our hearts and homes, pulpits and politics, offices and streets, interpersonal and inter-group relations, while awake or asleep, in our youth or old age, in secret or in the open, *everywhere* [Ps. 139:7-13]. That is why “from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised” [Ps. 113:3].

2. How to Apply for the Job

Even in normal life, we cannot just walk into an organization and tell the management, “I love your company and I want to work for you.” Yes, there are unsolicited applications, like when you send your curricula vitae (CVs) or *resumés* to potential employers. But, if you don’t match the profile that they are looking for and there is no vacancy, they may never get back to you. So, the usual pattern is that you respond to an advertisement. You may not be invited for the follow-up tests/interviews. However, let us assume that you win the competition and you are

found to be the best candidate. A letter of appointment is issued to you on terms dictated by the organization. If you reject those terms, they may offer the job to somebody else.

Getting recruited into God's service is similar in many respects. First of all, the advertised jobs include the following: *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, etc.*, [Eph. 4:11]. Secondly, it is Jesus who chooses us, we do not choose Him [Jn 15:16]. Jesus chose the 12 Apostles [Matt. 10:1-4]. He called Saul (Paul) in a dramatic fashion on his way to persecute Christians [Acts 9:1-6, 15-16]. Since the harvest is ripe and large but the labourers are few [Matt. 9:37], God's call is an offer you cannot refuse [Ps. 139:7]! Ask Jonah who tried to run away from God's call and he was transported back to his duty-post in Niniveh in the belly of a whale [Jon. 1:17; 2:10]!

If you are not called and you try to force yourself on Him, you could be inviting trouble, just as the security staff will be ready to throw you out of their company's premises if you are an unwanted visitor. The seven sons of Sceva tried to cast out an evil spirit in the name of Jesus and the evil spirit replied, "Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are ye?" The mad man in whom resided the evil spirit brutally attacked them and they escaped "naked and wounded" [Acts 19: 14-16]! Simon, a former sorcerer baptized by Deacon Philip, gave money to Peter to sell him the power of the Holy Spirit but Peter replied, "thy money perish with thee because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" [Acts 8:13-20]. So, that you have the means to build a church does not mean that you are called. A church without the Holy Spirit is nothing but a mere "palace of silver" [Song of Solomon 8:9]. We may have the *grace* to "earnestly covet the best gifts of God" [1 Cor. 12:31] but like any modern organization, He reserves the right to choose whom He chooses because He is gracious and shows mercy to whom He chooses [Ex. 33:19].

A final point to make here is that your calling may not be what you covet or like because that is His decision. However, His expectation of your job performance is the same, irrespective of your calling for, as the Psalmist says, it is better to "be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" [Ps. 84:10(b)]. Seek to know what He wants you to do for Him and stick to it.

3. **Our Equipment and Training**

The tools for our job are spiritual (i.e., Holy Spirit-backed) at all times [2 Cor. 10:4-5]. There is no room to resign because, during retreat, our backs are not protected from the attacks of the enemies, namely, the world [Jam. 4:1-4], the flesh [1 Pet. 4:1-4], the devil [1 Pet. 5:8], and invisible forces [Eph. 6:12]. Therefore, our induction and training are aimed at harnessing our human nature [Gal. 5:19-21] and transforming the mind [Rom. 12:2]. So, the process involves the following spiritual weapons:

(a) We must become born again, i.e., accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour, and receive water and Holy Spirit baptism [**Jn 3:3-5**]. Only those who believe in Jesus [**Jn 1:12**] and are led by the Holy Spirit [**Rom. 8:14**] are called the sons of God.

(b) Put on the whole armour of God which consists of [**Eph. 6: 11-17**]:

- ❑ Loins of *truth*
- ❑ Breastplate of *righteousness*
- ❑ Feet prepared to spread the *gospel of peace*
- ❑ Shield of *faith*
- ❑ The helmet of *salvation*
- ❑ The sword of the Spirit which is the *word of God*

(c) Pray always [**Eph. 6:18; 1 Thes. 5:17**]

For Holy Spirit anointing to remain permanent with you so that you may be able to walk by faith always [**2 Cor. 5:7**], the word of God must not depart from your mouths and your hearts [**Josh. 1:8**]. It must remain a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path [**Ps. 119:105**] because Satan also quotes it when he tempts us [**Lk 4:9-11**]. Therefore, your training is continuous because the devil cannot trap you when you are always watching him [**Prov. 1:17**]!

4. Your Duties

Your work consists mainly of battles against satanic forces that are warring with God's forces to divert souls to hell. Although hell is never full [**Prov. 27:20**], it has even been enlarged [**Is.5: 14**]! Therefore, there is a sense of urgency as we approach end times.

Don't ever make the mistake to think that your enemies are resting. If you allow the slightest complacency, you could lose the war. It was after crossing the Red Sea that the Israelites began to murmur and disobey God, and that converted their 40-day journey into one of 40 years [**Num. 14:33-34**]. The 5 foolish virgins missed the bridegroom because they went to buy oil for their lamps, something they should have done earlier but instead "slumbered and slept" [**Matt. 25: 3-13**]. So, those who desire to follow Jesus must not look back once they have put their hands to the plough [**Lk 9:62**].

Contrary to popular impressions, Satan is not ugly at all! He is called "the son of the morning" [**Is. 14:12**] who is "transformed into an angel of light" like his ministers [**2 Cor. 11:14-15**]. Therefore, you must beware of appearances. Be on your guard at all times. The end of one battle is the beginning of another, more ferocious one. We should, therefore, watch and pray so that we don't fall into the temptation of complacency [**Matt. 26:40-41**].

5. Retirement?

Retirement? Forget it! Jesus worked till His Crucifixion [**Matt. 26:43-46**]. Peter was led at old age to his martyrdom [**Jn 21:18**]. Moses was 80 years old when he confronted Pharaoh [**Ex. 7:7**]. At age 120, even when he could “no more go out and come in” [**Deut. 31:2**], he still completed writing “the words of this law in a book” [**Deut. 31:24**]. Therefore, a job with Jesus is a life-long commitment.

It is quite painful to see some men and women of God who, after long and hard years of “meritorious” service, have fallen into disgrace, having succumbed to the seducing spirits of lusts and materialism, and leaving behind bewildered congregations and admirers. That creates an opportunity for the devil to ridicule God. In the words of Jesus, harmful events in this world are unavoidable but “woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” [**Matt. 18:7**].

6. Conclusion

To perform our job with Christ successfully, Peter has offered us the following blue print [**2 Pet. 1:3-8**]:

- (a) Receive divine power to guide your mundane and spiritual choices “through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” [**v.3**];
- (b) Acquire divine nature so as to escape “the corruption that is in the world through lust” [**v.4**];
- (c) Diligently add to your faith, one after the other, the following: virtue, knowledge (of God), self-control, patience/endurance/perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity (love).

“If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off” [**2 Pet. 1:8-9**].

A job with Jesus has no vacation. It is a life-long commitment. Run the full course and be able to say like Paul: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me on that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing*” [**2 Tim. 4:6-8**].