

# HARD WORK NEVER KILLED ANYONE?

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK TO MATURE AS A *CHRISTIAN*.  
AND IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK AS A *COMMUNITY* TO ACHIEVE  
AND MAINTAIN *UNITY* IN THE CHURCH.

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# **HARD WORK NEVER KILLED ANYONE?**

## **PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18**

So far in his letter to the Philippian church, the Apostle Paul has emphasized the necessity for unity in the church. In other words, the church faces two major threats to its existence. The first is outside threats. If the church is truly reflecting the holiness of God's Kingdom, we will always find ourselves out of step with the world. In order to successfully fight off this threat, we must stand together. Jesus calls us to unity. Our safety and survival depend on it. The Bible describes Satan as a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Keep this picture in mind. Lions cannot successfully defeat a whole herd of animals. What they do is get the herd running. While running, an older animal may lag behind and get separated from the rest of the herd. Or a younger animal may wander off or fall behind. The lions separate the lone animal from the rest of the herd. Once they have the animal isolated, they attack and kill it. If we want to stand firm against Satan and this world, we must remain united. We are to fight on as a team.

The other threat to the survival of the church is decay from within. Our own sinful attitudes can destroy the unity of the church. Because we have a natural bent towards pride and selfishness, we are always a personal threat to the unity of the church. Paul said that the way we counter this is to guard our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. We are to be humble and we are to approach one another with sacrificial love and sacrificial service.

Last week, we saw that Paul illustrated those points by describing how Jesus lived them out. This week Paul is going to carry this a little further by instructing us that these are not merely suggestions to consider, they are commands to be obeyed.

In other words, growing to maturity as individuals and as a community is not an option.

It is a command given by God and illustrated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Growing to maturity is no easy task. In fact, living the Christian life in the context of community is hard work. We are not used to that concept nor are we thrilled about it. Let me give you an example. Thank God this is not the case here, but a pastor friend wrote me a letter describing his church. Here is what he wrote to me,"

*Dear John,*

*I've been at this church for about five years now and I can't seem to get things done. The people seem lazy in regards to their spiritual growth.*

*Every time I come up with some good programs, the Tate family always sabotages the work.*

*For example, there is Dic-Tate. He wants to run everything. If it's not his idea, he steps on it.*

*Then there is his brother Ro-Tate. All he wants to do is change everything.*

*Their sister Agi-Tate stirs up plenty of trouble, with the help of her husband Irri-Tate.*

*Whenever I come up with a new idea, Hesi-Tate and Vege-Tate want to wait until next year.*

*And there is this one woman, Aunty Imi-Tate who wants our church to be like all the others.*

*Old Uncle Devas-Tate is always telling us why we are going to fail and his brother Poten-Tate wants to jump in and take over things.*

*Thank God that all their family is not negative. They actually have some positive family members that encourage me. Brother Facili-Tate is quite helpful. His wife, Felici-Tate is always happy and delightful to be around. And their two young adult children Cogi-Tate and Medi-Tate always think things over and lend helpful, steady hands.*

*Sometimes I wish the negative members would follow their cousin Ampu-Tate who has left and cut himself off from the church.*

*Peace out,*

*Freddy*

I kind of feel sorry for my friend since the church seems to be self-destructing. When a church becomes weakened from disunity within, it cannot hope to survive outside attacks from Satan and the world.

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I think that if I'm not careful, I'll fall prey to the lie that things ought to happen quickly, easily, and naturally. Let me give some examples. If I want to lose weight, I look for a diet or a pill that says, *do this for a week and lose 10 pounds while eating all you want*. If I want to learn Spanish, I look for a program that advertises 10 easy lessons. We have been raised to look for quick fixes, short cuts, and easy solutions. We even believe this when it comes to relationships. Somehow people think that if we are in love, relationships should go easily and smoothly. But if you were to ask all the couples I counsel before marriage, they can tell you it is no easy task.

It is the same with our Christian maturity. There are no short cuts or easy formulas. Growing to personal maturity in Christ is hard work, and it is never finished. An even harder task is achieving and maintaining unity within the church. Believe me, it is difficult to achieve and maintain unity. Now keep in mind, unity and harmony don't mean unison. In other words, if church was composed of a homogenous group, it may be easier to maintain unity, but that really isn't unity. The church should be composed of people from as many diverse backgrounds as possible. The church should be mixed racially, culturally, economically, educationally, and socially. Maintaining unity in this kind of gathering is nothing short of a miracle. Nevertheless, that is what we are called to do. Here is the main idea of this morning's passage. **IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK TO MATURE AS A CHRISTIAN. AND IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK AS A COMMUNITY TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN UNITY IN THE CHURCH.**

I know this goes against everything we want to accept. It is easy for us to find people who think like we do, look like we do, talk like we do, and act like we do. It's part of our sinful nature that pulls us towards cliques. The problem with this type of lifestyle is that we will never be challenged to grow beyond it. Part of our job as Christians is to

be a living example of what God's Kingdom is all about. God's Kingdom is composed of people from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. And in God's Kingdom, there will be justice for all. As part of God's Kingdom, our church should be living that out as a witness to the community here in Roger's Park. I will address this later in the sermon. There are no shortcuts to personal maturity or unity in the church. It is hard work and we must work together.

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## I. WORKING WITH GOD (VS 12-13)

*GOD ENERGIZES, MOTIVATES, AND BRINGS ABOUT OUR SALVATION.  
WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS.*

Verses 12-13 instruct us that we are to be working with God. In other words, **GOD ENERGIZES, MOTIVATES, AND BRINGS ABOUT OUR SALVATION. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS.** It may seem strange to you that I picked out work as the theme of this passage, but if you will quickly look through the passage, I'll show you why I did. Verse 12 says we are to work out. Verse 13 says that God works. Verse 14 says that we are to do everything. In verse 16 Paul describes himself as a manual laborer. And in verse 17, the word service is a word that means religious work. This passage is peppered with words that all have to do with work. The Christian life is a lifetime filled with work. There is no retirement.

### A. GOD'S WORKING MODEL (12a)

Let's get started by looking at God's working model in the first phrase in verse 12. It starts out with, "*Therefore my dear friends.*" The word *therefore* indicates that this is some sort of conclusion. This section started back in chapter 1 verse 27. In 1:27 -2:4 Paul said the church should be unified. They should stand firm together against threats from outside the church and threats from inside the church. The church is to stand together in unity, love, and service. They are to put Christ first, others next, and self last. In 2:5-11, Paul used Christ as the example. The characteristics that stood out in Christ's life were His obedience, His sacrificial love, His sacrificial service, and His humility.

Based on our objective to bring glory to God and credibility to the gospel message by our maturity and unity, and Jesus' demonstration of what that kind of life should look like, Paul is going to tell the Philippians that they are to imitate Jesus.

There is a clue that Paul knows how much work this command is by the way he addresses them. That phrase, "*my dear friends,*" in Greek simply reads, "*beloved.*" Paul reminds the Philippians that they are truly loved. They are loved by God and they are loved by Paul. They are beloved. How often do we pause long enough to not only think about that, but let it sink in ... down to the very depths of our being. I know I believe that God loves me and He has put all sorts of people in my life that demonstrate His love to me. But rarely do I take time to get away from all the distractions and let that love overflow me and overwhelm me.

Paul knows what he is about to command the Philippians is hard work, but he wants to let them know that the motivation for them to take on the task is love. The encouragement and empowerment for them to go on and not give up is love. It is this mystical, intertwined love between themselves, God, Paul, and each other.

Through this letter to the Philippians, God is asking us to do some incredibly difficult things. But I want to remind us that we are loved by God and one another. As God weaves His love for us together with our love for Him and one another, we are energized by an incredible force of love. Jesus is God's model. We are to imitate Jesus in humility, obedience, sacrificial love, and sacrificial service.

## **B. OUR WORK (12b)**

That brings us to the nature of our work in the second half of verse 12. This overwhelming feeling of love should move us to obey God. I like the way Paul approaches the Philippians. First of all, he reminds them that they have a rich tradition of obedience. After all, the church got off to a rocky start. Paul and Titus were jailed and beaten. Nevertheless, the early church thrived and grew in this city. They loved God and they loved Paul. I don't want us to miss this. Paul's case was a high profile case. Since he caused the local government in Philippi some considerable embarrassment, and some of its citizens considerable financial loss, they would like to see him convicted of treason. I'm pretty sure that the Philippian church was experiencing harassment from the local town's people. But they continued to support Paul with money and physical help. They continued to stand up for their faith in God. But we must keep in mind that there is still some trouble in the church. There may be some divisions in the church. As we said before it was a very diverse church. They had many nationalities. There were people from every walk of life. They had rich and poor, free and slave, men and women. They were commanded to love and serve one another. They were called to dynamic unity. And Paul says that since they had such a rich history and tradition of obedience, they should draw on that and continue on in

obedience. This obedience will be a test of their loyalty to God, to Paul, and to the church.

Look at the command they are to obey in the last phrase of verse 12. Paul says, "*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*" Notice it doesn't say, "work for your salvation," it says, "work out your salvation." Paul makes it very clear that we are saved by grace through faith. In other words, we can never work for nor earn our salvation in any way. The word used for *work* out here means something like to work out a math problem or to work out the details of something. Remember, we said that salvation came in three stages. Justification comes in the past tense. In other words, we were saved by grace. In one sense, we are already saved. There will come a time in the future when we will be glorified. We will stand before God in eternity and be saved. He will give us new resurrection bodies and perfect minds, hearts, and souls. We are now being sanctified. We are being shaped and molded into the people God has destined us to be. We are in the process of being saved. We are to fear and tremble as we contemplate this process.

I know there has been a lot written about this, but I'm going to focus on three aspects of it. First of all, we should all meditate on who we are without Christ's gift of righteousness. In other words, just pretend for a moment that we were born neutral, with a clean slate. Next, think about how holy and pure God is. Think about His commands. As you reflect on your life, how do think it would go for us on judgment day when we stand before God? In my own personal meditation I think, "What if God came to me and said, 'John, all your sins are forgiven. I'm giving you a clean slate. From now on, I'm going to judge you simply on what you think, say, and do. I'm going to judge you on your own righteousness.'" When I think about this, I immediately start to fear and tremble because I know I can't last 10 minutes without falling into some sin. I then become aware of the fact that God is not saying this. I was saved by grace through faith. I am presently being saved by grace through faith, and I will be saved by grace. So as I think about the details of my salvation I should be moved to fear and trembling when contemplating my sin and moved to joy and peace when contemplating the wonderful grace of Jesus.

Secondly, we have been given an awesome task by God. Not only has He graced us with salvation, He has given us Spiritual gifts, many talents, and a variety of resources. We are expected to evangelize the lost, disciple believers, and bring justice and mercy to those less fortunate; with all these assets He has given to us. When I think about the awesome responsibility I have, and when I see how much time, energy, and money I spend on selfish interests, I fear and tremble when I think about how I have squandered

all these resources He has given me. Again, it forces me to the cross of Jesus for forgiveness and restoration.

And finally, the word *salvation* for Paul primarily means individual spiritual wholeness, but it can also refer to community salvation, wholeness, and health. Think about this. The church in Philippi is experiencing some tension and potential division. Paul wants them to think about the fact that Jesus, through His incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection, saved them and made them a family. As they each think about what part they played in the conflict, they must think about the fact that through the example of Jesus, they have been commanded to let go of their pride, their personal agendas, their selfishness, and their power. They are commanded to be humble, sacrificially loving, and sacrificially serving. They should work out the community wholeness with fear and trembling.

We are not very good at that in the United States , are we? We church shop. If we don't like something, we just get up and find another church. If we are vested enough to have some power, we argue, we fight, until we get our own way. Keep this in mind. There was probably only one Christian church in the city of Philippi . There were no other options. I wonder how the church in the United States would survive if there were no options ... if people were forced to get along.

We are required to work out the details of our personal growth and maturity. We are required to work out the details of unity in our church. I think the biggest obstacle to achieving both goals is our pride. Somehow each of us thinks we are better and smarter than we actually are. Not many of us are very good at being humble. Let me give us all a quick test. How many of us feel that we are smarter, and more competent than our bosses and co-workers? How many of us have trouble with our bosses and co-workers? My feeling is that most of us feel that way. And if we were to do a personal job history review, we could confirm that attitude. My guess is that not many of us, me included, are good at being submissive and humble.

But thank God, He knows us even better than we know ourselves. If we were left up to our own devices, we would certainly mess everything up beyond repair and all of us would be lost for an eternity. Let's take a look at God's work in this partnership. Here we see another word for *work*. It is the Greek word from which we get our English word *energy* from. This word for *work* usually refers to some spiritual force whether it be demonic or from God. Referring to us Christians, it says that God energizes us to will the right things and then He energizes the work we do. God has great plans for our lives. Each one of us has a story written for us in God's book of life in which we are the

heroes. There are people in the world who are hungry. You may be the hero that comes along and feeds them. There are people who have been betrayed in relationship. They are hurting. You may be the hero that comes to their side to comfort them. There are people in the world who don't know Jesus. They are headed for an eternity in Hell. You may be the hero that rescues them by bringing them the gospel message. There may be some person who is the object of racism. You may be the hero called to stand up for him. God is writing many stories. He is writing you and me in as the heroes.

### **C. GOD'S WORK (13)**

Please don't miss the power of verse 13. God is constantly speaking to us. I am by nature selfish. I am by nature self-centered. I am by nature stubborn. I would never come up with humble, sacrificial acts of love and service. But God puts the idea and the will in me. God draws my attention to the homeless person. God gives me compassion for the retarded person. God moves me to stand up for brothers or sisters who are being mistreated. God gives me patience to be with the hurting. And thank God He gives people a heart, and a lot of patience to be with and minister to me. And not only does God give me the desire to minister; He gives me the ability to minister.

Let's make this practical. I'm going to use the word *you* in these questions because it's easier to understand. But I am also asking myself these questions as well. Do you know that God wants you to get rid of sinful thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors? Do you that He wants you to grow up as a Christian and stop being a baby Christian? Do you know He wants you to get rid of all that pride and that self-absorbed thinking and acting? Yes, it's hard work. But if we will just humble ourselves and submit to God, and listen to Him, He will put the thoughts in our heads and the desires in our hearts to obey. He has also given us the Holy Spirit to energize our obedience.

Secondly, can you hear God's voice leading you to making this church whole? Are there people you need to forgive? Think about how much forgiveness you need. Are there people who need financial help? Are there people who need spiritual help, financial support, and emotional friendship? There are many stories right here in this church that God wants you and me to be the heroes of. Can you hear Him? He wants this community to be whole. He wants us to be the heroes. This is really difficult work but it is a partnership between God, each one of us, and one another. **GOD ENERGIZES, MOTIVATES, AND BRINGS ABOUT OUR SALVATION. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS.**

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## II. WORKING WITH EACH OTHER (VS 14-16a)

*IT TAKES A LOT OF CHARACTER TO BE A GOOD TEAM PLAYER.*

For those of you who read and study your bibles, you will recognize that this section is rich with Old Testament themes. I don't have time to go over them all, but it is interesting how he uses them but often puts a clever twist on them. In your own personal bible study, look up these references in the Old Testament and see how Paul is using them here. But the main idea of verses 14 through the first half of verse 16 is how we are to be working with each other. In reality, **IT TAKES A LOT OF CHARACTER TO BE A GOOD TEAM PLAYER.**

### A. THE JOB AT HAND (14a)

From the example of Jesus from last week's text, individuals must put the team ahead of themselves. The first half of verse 14 describes the job at hand. Here is Paul's first reference to the Hebrews. From the time they left Egypt until the time they entered the Promised Land, they grumbled and complained against Moses and God. Israel was called to be God's messengers to the whole world. As the world watched how the Hebrews treated one another and worshipped God, they were to be drawn to the one true and living God. In the New Testament, the church is supposed to pick up the role. When people look at us, they ought to be able and understand what God is like. It is our unity and our love that points the way to Jesus. This community is supposed to be a reflection of the way things are done in heaven. I want to again let you know before I say this, that what I'm about to say is only my opinion. I'm not sure many scholars agree with me.

Since heaven will be composed of people of every race, culture, social class, economic level, educational level, and both genders, the church should reflect that. I think we need to hear Martin Luther King Jr. speak to us over and over and over again until we get it. He said that Sunday morning is the most segregated time in our lives. We are integrated at work, at school, and in most public places. However, on Sunday mornings, people flock to be with their particular ethnicities. Here is my opinion. Whenever and wherever possible, we should be gathering together with people from different races, classes, etc. I think the only legitimate ethnic ministries should be for first generation immigrants who don't speak English. There should be no second-generation ethnic ministries. Why should this sinful world, under the rule of Satan more resemble heaven than the church? I would never want to go to an all-White church, an all-Black church, an all-Hispanic church or an all-Asian church. I don't want to go to a church

where everyone is rich. Personally, I am glad that God led me here to Devon Church . I can talk with people from every part of the world, from different races, cultures, and all sorts of backgrounds. The job is to grow to spiritual maturity in this context and to build this group to unity. That's hard work because each of us needs to be humble enough to accommodate one another.

Whenever churches grow, things become uncomfortable. When the Hebrews got uncomfortable, they always wanted to go back to Egypt . The church is to build unity in diversity. It can only happen as we humbly follow Jesus. I never want to go back to Egypt . I'd rather die a free man in the wilderness than ever return to the slavery of Egypt . Integration, growth, maturity and unity all take a lot of hard work. Yet, that's the job we've been given. But unity without diversity is only unison. Diversity without unity is chaos. Unity with diversity is true harmony. I'm afraid that pride and fear almost always stand in the way.

## **B. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD WORKER (14b-15)**

The characteristics of a good worker and team player are spelled out in the second half of verse 14 and verse 15. If I were clever, I would subtitle this section, "This little light of mine." Let me point out one of the Old Testament references and show you why it is important that we commit ourselves to these goals. Look where it refers to us as children of God. Again, we are to stand out from a crooked and depraved generation. We are to work without grumbling and complaining. The Hebrews were God's children, His chosen people. Yet they were the ones Moses said grumbled and complained. They were the ones who comprised the crooked and depraved generation. When faced with diversity, we can easily be tempted to grumble and complain. We can easily be tempted to grumble. It's easy to say things like, "I remember when all Italians went here. What are those people doing here? We didn't have problems like this when there were all Italians here. I wish we could go back to our roots and emphasize our ministry to Italians again." In other words, "Let's go back to Egypt ."

It takes courage and guts and faith to live out life as God's children. Look at the characteristics that make good team players. As God's children we are to be blameless, pure and faultless. Now in the Greek, Paul uses three words, and then negates them with a prefix. *Blameless* is literally without fault, *pure* is literally without mixture, and *faultless* is without defect. We are to be pursuing individual holiness.

As a community of believers, as the body of Jesus Christ, as people of Devon Church , we are to stand out as examples of God's Kingdom here in Roger's Park. The meaning

of shining like stars in the universe means to light up the dark. Stars light up the dark sky. A torch lights up a dark room. The world does not have a clue what heaven is going to be like. The world does not have a clue as what God's Kingdom is like. The world is in the dark as to Who God is and what He expects. Just think for a moment what Devon Ave. and Clark Street is like 5 blocks east and west from church and 5 blocks north and south on Clark. This neighborhood is in the dark. The city is in the dark. Our nation is in the dark. We as God's children are commanded to light up this area. There must be unity in diversity here. This must be a place for racial reconciliation. This must be a place for social justice. This must be a place for compassion. This must be a place where people from all parts of the world and from every type of background and situation can find salvation in Jesus Christ and a place in His family, the church. We are to be the light in this neighborhood.

### **C. WORKING WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS (16a)**

And the first half of verse 16 reminds us that we must be working with the right tools. We are to hold out the word of life. In other words, the bible is to be the only source of our guidance. It is to be what governs our individual lives and the life of the church. The way we live our lives and the witness we have as a church should point clearly to Jesus. We should be a taste of heaven on earth. That is quite a mission and responsibility we have as individual Christians and as a church. Are we up to the task? **IT TAKES A LOT OF CHARACTER TO BE A GOOD TEAM PLAYER.**

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## **III. WORKING WITH ENTHUSIASM (VS 16b-18)**

*WE ARE EXPECTED TO GIVE ALL WE HAVE TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF MATURITY AND UNITY.*

We have learned so far that it takes humility, love, and sacrifice to work with God and others. But there is one more command here for us. The second half of verse 16 through verse 18 states that we must work with enthusiasm. In other words **WE ARE EXPECTED TO GIVE ALL WE HAVE TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF MATURITY AND UNITY.**

### **A. PAYDAY WILL COME (16b)**

The second half of verse 16 tells us that payday will come. The Apostle Paul always has eternity in mind. For Paul *The Day of Christ* is when Jesus will return and set

everything in its proper place. We will all be judged and all our work will be evaluated. Here we run into another word for *work*. Labor means to exert oneself in physical labor. So Paul is mixing a sports metaphor and combining it with a work metaphor. Paul is saying to the Philippians something like, "Remember, our faith, our love, and our respective works are being woven together with the love and empowerment of God. Our destinies are all tied up in one another. I want you to succeed so that you will be one of the works I present to Christ and I will be one of the works you present to Christ. I'd hate to think we worked so hard in our training and then because we slacked off at the end, we are disqualified to receive the prize."

There is a lot at stake here for Paul. Remember from Christ's example, because He persevered to the end, He was exalted. Paul is saying we did not come all this way just to quit at the end. As we persevere in humility, in unity, in sacrifice, service and love, our prizes await us in heaven. We will receive individual and team awards. So don't give up.

## **B. WORSHIP IS WORK (17a)**

That brings him to his next point in the first part of verse 17. Worship is work. Paul realizes that at any time, he may be killed for his faith in God and the Philippians could be killed at any time for their faith. The word *service* there is the same word we get *liturgy* from. It is religious service or religious work. We are to be living sacrifices. In other words, our work is to continually sacrifice our egos and our prejudices. Our work is to bring attention and glory to God and credibility to the gospel message by the way we live as individuals and as a church. Do you remember back in this section of Paul's letter where he said we are to be good citizens of God's Kingdom? It takes a lot of hard work to achieve unity in the church. It takes a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to mature as individual believers. But it is worth it because as the second half of verse 17 and verse 18 state, working together is rewarding.

## **C. WORKING TOGETHER IS REWARDING (17b-18)**

I don't know how many of you have ever played sports, but I can tell you there is nothing like playing on a championship team. When I played baseball, we didn't have the most talented team. However, everybody was a team player. We spent time on and off the field together and the team just clicked. Each player had his role and no one was concerned with personal stats. The interesting thing was, not only did we win the championship, but many of us made the all-star team as well. There is nothing like seeing other people in church succeed and achieve all sorts of things. Paul rejoiced that the Philippians were succeeding and the Philippians were happy to see Paul succeeding.

After all they were intertwined in each other's lives and deaths. I work hard at growing in my personal walk with Christ and I work hard at everything I do here at Devon Church because I love God and I love all of you. My prayer is that you first feel that overwhelming love of God in your lives and then pour out yourselves into bringing unity, humility, love, sacrifice and service to Devon Church . We need everyone here to be on board. We have a championship team here. Let's give it all we have. **WE ARE EXPECTED TO GIVE ALL WE HAVE TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF MATURITY AND UNITY.**

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## IV. EPLIOGUE

I love the way Studs Terkel talked about the nature of work in his book on work. I think he captures what I'm after. He says,

*"This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence – to the spirit as well as to the body. It is about ulcers as well as accidents. About shouting matches as well as fist fights. About nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around. It is, above all (or beneath all), about daily humiliations. To survive the day is triumph enough."*

Who said hard work never killed anyone? The fact is **IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK TO MATURE AS A CHRISTIAN. AND IT TAKES A LOT OF HARD WORK AS A COMMUNITY TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN UNITY IN THE CHURCH.**

I know that we are to be different from the world, but I also know that our priorities are just as messed up as the world's. We often work hard at all the wrong things. Listen to what Gordon Dahl says.

*"Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their work, to work at their play, and to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair, and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot."*

That can never be for Christians. We know our purpose. As individuals and as a church we are to work hard at personal maturity and unity in the church. This will bring glory to God and credibility to the gospel message. Let us strive to let the light of Jesus

shine in this neighborhood and everywhere we go.