

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Oh, labor on, while it is day;
The world's dark night is hastening on;
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away!
It is not thus that souls are won.

2 Men die in darkness at your side,
Without a hope to cheer the tomb:
Take up the torch and wave it wide
The torch that lights time's thickest gloom.

3 Toil on, faint not; keep watch and pray!
Be wise the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway;
Compel the wanderer to come in.

4 Go, labor on: your hands are weak;
Your knees are faint, your soul cast down;
Yet falter not, the prize you seek
Is near, a kingdom and a crown!

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

Night Is Coming

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

John 9:4

Jesus had just disappeared from the temple where they had taken stones up to throw at Him. His disciples were with Him as they passed a man born blind. The disciples were inquisitive and wanted to know if the man's blindness was attributable to his personal sin or his parent's sin. Jesus' answer was neither one, but it was for the furthering of the works of God. Then Jesus asserted that He must be about His Father's business by doing what His Father required, while the opportunity presented itself, for night was on the way.

Jesus came with a task in view for He "must work the works of Him that sent Him, while it is day." God sent forth His Son in the fulness of time, "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." While it was day He sought to do the

Father's will, to seek and to save that which was lost, to call sinners to repentance, etc. Jesus fulfilled perfectly the work given Him to do while it was day. General Lighthorse Harry Lee once observed to his chief, General George Washington, "We are amazed, sir, at the vast amount of work that you accomplish." Washington replied, "Sir, I rise at four o'clock, and a great deal of my work is done while others are asleep." We must remember to work while it is day for night is coming.

Jesus aimed to stay on schedule because "the night was coming when no man could work." "Night" was metaphorical for the end of an opportunity to work or the end of life. The Lord said, "I say, brethren, the time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29). Another way of describing this is "the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7). "'The night cometh.' You cannot put it off. As sure as night comes in its due season to the earth, so death comes to you. There are no arts nor maneuvers by which night can be deferred or prevented, nor by which death can be postponed or altogether adjourned. 'The night cometh,' however much we may dread it, or however much we may long for it; it comes, with stealthy tread, surely, and in its appointed time. 'The night cometh.' The night cometh for the pastor, who has labored for his flock; for the evangelist, who has preached with earnestness ...; for the missionary, who has worked for souls. 'The night cometh.' The night cometh for the sitters in the pews; for the father, the mother, the daughter, the husband, the wife. 'The night cometh.' Dear ... (reader), shall you need to be reminded that the night cometh for you? Will you take it home to yourself, or will you, nursing man's hapless delusion, 'think all men mortal but yourself?' The night cometh when the eye shall be closed, when the limbs shall grow cold and stiff, when the pulse shall be feeble, and at last shall stop its beating. 'The night cometh,'" [Spurgeon].

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the Christian literary figure of England, who was the great writer and lexicographer (*A Dictionary of the English Language*) had inscribed on the face of his watch these words in Greek *erchetai nux* or "night cometh." He wanted to be reminded every time he looked at his watch what Jesus said about the limited opportunity we face in this world. Dr. Johnson was a devout Christian who feared displeasing the Lord by sin. One said of his Christianity that it was of "no lip-service nor cold formality."

On one occasion he said to Dr. Adams, "I am terribly afraid of death; I think I may be one of those who shall be damned!" "What do you mean by damned?" asked Dr. Adams. The old doctor replied, "Sent to hell, sir, and punished everlastingly." His realization of his sin against a perfectly holy God was also a reminder to him that "night cometh." On another occasion in 1773 he breakfasted and attended church services with James Boswell, who would be his biographer. Boswell said that he would never forget the earnestness that Dr. Johnson pronounced the petition: "In the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment,

good Lord, deliver us.” The doctor lived out his life “in the twilight, but sunshine came at last” that is before the night came.

In Dr. Johnson’s seventy-second year he repeated the following words to a friend, and they were the gracious words of forgiveness that Jesus addressed to Mary Magdalene, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” The friend said his quotation was very affecting as he recited the Saviour’s words. At the end of his life, during his final hours, he asked his doctor if he had a chance of recovery, to tell him the truth, and the doctor said he would not recover. Dr. Johnson said, “Then, I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I desire to render up my soul to God unclouded!” His physician said that before his death “all his fears were calmed. He talked to me about the necessity of faith in the sacrifice of Jesus as necessary, beyond all good works whatever, for the salvation of mankind. He pressed me to study Dr. Clarke and to read his sermons. I asked him why he specially commended Dr. Clarke, and he replied that it was because Dr. Clarke made most of Christ’s redeeming sacrifice.” He sent for Frank his negro servant and spoke to him, “Attend, Frank, above all else, to the salvation of your soul—*that* is of supreme importance.”

Dr. Samuel Johnson as he was dying prayed, “Almighty and Most Merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, almost to commemorate, for the last time, the death of my Redeemer (he was being given communion). Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in His merits and Thy mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance; and make the death of Thy Son effectual to my redemption. Pardon the multitude of my offences; support me in the hour of death; and receive me to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.”