

**Work hard** (John 6:24-35)

\* Friends, upon listening the John ch.6 we've heard that a tragedy came within one night, because bread and fish were eaten and the leftover was taken off, (Joh 6:12,13). People stopped to believe in Jesus' name, (Joh 6:30), as far as there were no more evidences of that miraculous sign. While analyzing human faith and trust upon an individual I found Charles Allen's story that reflects on this topic. "As World War II was drawing to a close, the Allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well-fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he or she was put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held by the child — not eaten. This approach produced wonderful results. The children went to bed and slept well; although they may not believe and trust, their well being is with them, stored in the secure place. Guess where? Maybe in their saving accounts? No! They are storing their "bread" under pillows.

\* After reading John I found a common problem. The people from all ages don't want to work by faith, instead they want a cheap way, they look for miracles to get the profits. We can infer that on a day after feeding the 5000, Jews looked for a way to be fed for free on a regular basis. So they decided to make Jesus a king, but when Jesus rejected that idea (Joh 6:15), the people decided to be kings themselves. They approached Jesus and asked him, what must we do to be doing the works of God? (v.28). In other words, Jews called for the confident information that should invoke God's power and through that power they hoped to get benefits. The same idea is found in (Acts 8:18-23), where Simon, the magician, asked Peter to sell him the power of the Holy Spirit for his own good. Don't be surprised, the wizards know how it works.

\* Friends, let me ask, with what idea do you come up with when you hear the words, *God's work*? What is in your mind? Surely we think that God's work is something that people are not able to do. For example, do you think of momentarily healing the leprous persons, the casting out of a legion of demons, the feeding of the 5000, the bringing the dead to life and so forth? Such works were done by God in Jesus and through Jesus, (Joh 5:19). But the same works were done by God in Peter, for instance, and through Peter, (Act 5:15). After the ascension Jesus continued doing God's work through the apostles and even through

ordinary people who loved Him. Psalms and the Book of Acts speak a lot on this account. Asking for a definition, the Babylon English-English dictionary says that a miracle is a *wonderful occurrence that is considered to be the work of God*; therefore God's work is determined as miracles and God's work can be done through people as well. Isn't it clear as day?

\* Again it is quite clear, first, that the miracles and God's work can be used synonymously; second, God's work can be done through people and by people to whom He pleases. Now I'll introduce you a new idea; there it is. In fact some events in the Bible come into view as ordinary, although they are supernatural. For instance, it seems that the erection of the first temple in Jerusalem came by the use of human force. The Scripture says, David collected treasures and assembled units. This allowed Solomon to start and complete the temple construction with the help of talented and skillful men, (2Ch 5:1). Another event (Gen 41) says that Egyptians were saved from the seven years of famine because Joseph stored up a lot of grain in advance. There are many other similar stories in the Scripture, like the story of rediscovering the Book of the Law in time of King Josiah, (2Chr. 34), or the story of sending Nehemiah by the King of Persia to rebuild the walls in Jerusalem, (Neh.1:1-2:18), and so forth. The point here is that by themselves these stories are not viewed as miraculous acts because they are man's work; as a result, the temple came up not from nothing and the hungry Egyptians received grain after preparation. But what I want to make clear is that all such works are really God's works; God performed these things through and by people, even though they seem to us as ordinary, being performed by people's power, skills, and talents. In (Joh 6:32) Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. Friends, no doubt I would be found on the street more dead than alive in Russia, or under a bridge as a troll in the US, if the Father would be stopped doing His miraculous work.

\* Reflecting on my personal life in US, I recall almost three years without permission to work, no money, no place to live, no supporters; even church didn't hand out in my crucial time of need. But in spite of that I was kept from illegal status, from being homeless, or from being short of bread. Could you believe that? Our Father in Heaven miraculously satisfies all our needs in time. In a critical moment we called upon the Lord and He gave us a place to live. Incredibly, it was a beautiful and peaceful place. There we stayed for three

years, permitted to live in the small house for free until I enrolled to study theology at the finest seminary in the Missouri Synod. Of course, my creditability was not comparable with many American students in age, language, resources, supporters and so forth. But God continued to keep us up-to-date with all “*you have to do.*” Miraculously, I passed one class after another. So many tests, so many exams! So many nights.

All my classes were taken in English. In summary, during my life in the US I graduated from two theological seminaries in US, with two Masters degrees. Friends, again, Could you believe it? No debts, no bad grades! Though I am not strong or reach.

\* My daughter received her BA from Concordia University in Mequon and three years after God gave her a husband; he is of the same age and from a good family. As far as I know they love each other. One year ago I became the grandpa of a son and a citizen of the US. Again, if that is not enough, God had worked out to find me a church I would fit into. He found the most charming church I’ve ever seen, and He continues to build good relations between me and the congregation. After all, do you think that it is time to take a break? Friends, certainly God will take a break if I will !!!

\* By chance we discovered the law of sinful nature that is working according to the algorithm of simplification: *Less bread ... Less faith.* It is sad to hear but we have to know that it is natural to a fallen humanity. We are like those orphans children who believe only if they have. But if a number of our church members drops down, does it cause the children’s faith be down too? As the Gospel says, on the next day after feeding the 5000 there was less enthusiasm, less faith and no Hosanna. Instead people’s speech were preoccupied with conditional *if*, doubtful questions, and demands. In response Jesus makes demands too. He says, you must believe on me as I come from the Father, (the paraphrase of Joh 6:29). Please notice, the Solomon Temple was God’s work but the builders had to work hard. Next to that, the seven years of famine in Egypt didn’t harm people unto death because Joseph and his servants made the great effort by gathering grain in advance. These people worked hard by faith in order to see God’s glory and to be benefited by God through his work. Jesus and his apostles after him taught, no cheap bread is available now! If children like to play they have to pay, (Luk 16:16; Mat 5:20). It is Jesus’ response to the Jews, and to us as well.

\* In concluding, I tell you my own story that quite a bit fits in current discussion.

When I was in second grade my teacher might ask me to do a memo work. Once I worked hard with her assignment at home; but the text I had to memorize came very slow. Before bedtime, my mom said, I know something special, it will help. Really, is there something?, I replied. Just put the book under pillow, she said. While you sleep the words which were hard to remember will fill your mind. But be sure that the book remains under your pillow while you are in bed. Actually I doubted it; but just in case I followed my mom's instruction. Surprisingly, I awoke in the morning and was able to repeat the poem from memory without mistakes! I got a good grade that day. It amazed me so much that I kept doing the same thing again and again. But soon after, I realized that without practicing the memory work the miracle didn't happen. From this I learned that the memory work should be done first. It is hard but it works. Friends, the miracle will not happen until in your life there will be found concern to learn and practice the way of Life. From believing **to** the Father we are given to believe **in** the Son who himself is the Chief Miracle. Being given we've seen his glory, (Exo 16:10), and might be benefited with the Bread of Life forever, (Joh 6:40).

Beloved grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen