

September 2006—“Tap ‘er Light”

Tap ‘er light. This old saying, unfamiliar to most, finds its origin in western Montana from “Cousin Jacks,” the miners who emigrated from Cornwall England. In order to hand drill the rock for dynamite, one man would hold the drill rod (about 1¼ inch diameter), and a second man would hit it with a double jack (a sledgehammer). Apprehensive about getting his hand whacked, the first would say “tap ‘er light.” “Tap” was a misnomer since the sledge was coming full circle and would smack the rod with nothing less than a wholehearted swing! The holder would twist the rod about ¼ of a turn, and at that instant the big hammer would strike again, creating a rhythmic cadence. Do you remember “John Henry, the steel driving man?” That’s the idea.

After drilling, the warning was again appropriate as they would cautiously pack the dynamite . . . and carefully *tap* it all the way to the bottom of the hole! The comment later evolved into a greeting when they passed each other to and from the mine; “Tap ‘er light” was an encouraging way of saying “Have a good shift.”

In my ministries, many passages have served to encourage and inspire me in my desire “have a good shift,” one that is productive in God’s estimation. I’m especially stirred by 1 Corinthians 15:58—“*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*” The straightforwardness thrills me; we need to do our work for the Lord. I try to visualize it: me accomplishing whatever I’m doing directly for the Lord. Even though I love people and welcome their positive response, I don’t do my work for them. So if folks appreciate me, it’s a wonderful benefit. It is not an expectation, nor a disappointing encumbrance, when gratitude is absent. Simply put, do your work for God.

Many years ago, I came to an awareness, dramatic at first, that continues to afford an excellent motivational encouragement in establishing priorities; Jesus Christ did not accomplish everything others thought He should (*neither will I*). Yet He did accomplish everything His Father desired of Him (*so can I!*) Consider these from the Lord Himself: “. . .for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29); “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). Add to these the precious reminder that our time is limited: “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).

As we serve together, make no mistake about it, what was true of Jesus’ ministry can be true of ours. We will never accomplish everything everyone desires of us. Yet we can accomplish everything the Lord Jesus desires of us. Dear people, this simplistic yet biblical logic should help sculpt our ministry focus and accomplishments. Let’s make it our ambition. I’m glad I’m on your shift! Tap ‘er light, my friends; tap ‘er light! I’ll hold the drill rod.

Bill