

12.12.2020 THE CHRISTIAN AND WORK

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58

Work is one of the big three pre-Fall practices that have carried over into our current post-Fall situation (Gen. 2:15), the other two being Sabbath keeping (Gen. 2:2, 3) and marriage (Gen. 2:21–24). So, work, or being meaningfully occupied with tasks, comes directly from a sinless paradise. The first references to work in the Bible are about God's work in Creation – Genesis 2:2, 3. After he was created, Man was invited to work as well.

Though sin has marred God's original work and Man's work, God's redeeming work has restored work to its proper perspective. Men and women who follow God in a sinful world will find the same purpose and meaning in their work as Adam and Eve did before the Fall.

Jesus our Saviour was a worker. He spent more years as a carpenter at the carpenter's trade than He did in public ministry.

When we look at work in the Bible, we see 5 aspects of work:

1. God the Worker
2. Man and Work before the Fall
3. Man and Work after the Fall
4. Man and Work after Redemption
5. Work in the New Earth

God the Worker

Any study of work must start with God. We acknowledge that we worship a God who works.

The Godhead is active in Creation, Providence (sustaining Creation), Redemption and Re-Creation (the restoration of God's creation to His original purpose).

Creation

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Gen. 1:31

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Gen. 2:7-9

Providence - sustaining Creation

...in Him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28

Through the Son God created the universe...and the Son sustains everything by the mighty power at His command. Hebrews 1:2, 3

Redemption

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.." John 17:4

"You have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Revelation 5:9

Re-Creation – restoration to God's image

Christ is 'bringing many sons to glory...' Hebrews 2:10

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6

His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. 2 Peter 1:3

Man and Work before the Fall

Man, created in the image of God is the only being on planet earth with the capacity to create, to imagine and to work to the goal of producing what his mind has imagined and planned.

Marriage, the Sabbath and work are pre-fall gifts to Man. In Eden, God gave man work. Adam and Eve's work therefore originated with God (God's will).

Their work was:

- Purposeful
- Fruitful (productive)
- Meaningful – because they worked in a perfect relationship to God, to each other and to nature.

God chose to let man participate in His work of creation, sustaining creation and helping it achieve its potential.

"God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'" Genesis 1:28

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it ('avad' – serve) and keep it." Genesis 2:15

'And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him **to rest** in the garden of Eden, **to serve** it, and **to keep** it' Genesis 2:15. *Young's Literal Translation*

The elements of rest, service and preserving God's original design are part of God's plan for man's work.

The Cycle of Rest and Work for Man:

*'And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him **to rest** in the garden of Eden, **to serve** it, and **to keep** it.'* Genesis 2:15. *Young's Literal Translation*

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. Genesis 2:1-3

Note that the work/rest cycle is different for God and Man:

God works and then rests.

Man rests in God's finished work and then worships and serves God.

Man and Work after the Fall

There were consequences to Man's rebellion. Woman was to labour in child-bearing and man was to toil by the sweat of his brow to make the earth fruitful.

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children...to Adam He said..."Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and

thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground..." Genesis 3:16-19

Work has been distorted by the entrance of sin:

1. Dominion is distorted to exploitation.
2. Service is distorted by self-seeking, dishonesty and resentment.
3. Fruitfulness has been replaced by 'thorns and thistles' - luxuriously growing but useless plants. Does that remind us of some of the products of work in today's world?
4. Work has become meaningless; man does not look to God for purpose, provision or planning. His work is self-oriented not God or service oriented.

Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. James 5:4

All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied. Ecclesiastes 6:7

Then I hated all my labour in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labour in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is meaningless. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labour in which I had toiled under the sun. Ecclesiastes 2:17-20

Redeemed Man and Work

Despite the entrance of sin, there is still profitable work seen in our fallen world. This is entirely due to the mercy of God who has not left Himself without a witness. Men and women of good conscience still produce work that is of excellent quality. And God has always had a people through whom He produces good work. In the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, God enabled the artisans and craftsmen by giving them His Spirit.

*Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. **And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.** And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you." Exodus 31:1-6*

But above all Christ, by His death, has removed the curse of sin and calls men and women to live as redeemed sons and daughters of God instead of self-centred children of Adam.

This means that work for a Christian will be restored to God's original purpose:

1. Work will be initiated and guided by the Holy Spirit.
2. Work will be productive and fruitful.
3. Work will have the attributes of service, worship and excellence.
4. Work will be meaningful: our work will flow out of a restored relationship to God, to each other and to nature.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. Mark 10:45

Command those who are rich...to be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1 Timothy 6:18, 19

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58

Work in the New Earth

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. Revelation 22:3

In the earth made new, we, the redeemed will experience the joy and satisfaction of working in a world free of sin and the curse of sin.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind... They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain.” Isaiah 65:17, 21-23

Conclusion:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58

Our memory text exhorts us to live in the confidence of God’s perfect work for us. All true work is a reflection of that perfect work. We respond by working in God’s will, by His power and for His glory.

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” Colossians 3:23–24.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete (perfect) in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20, 21

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:36
