

Sunday School May 16th

Necessity of Godly Labor

Here we are back again prior to the fall, prior to sin. We get the opportunity to see anew God's design in its purest form.

Today, we will look at the necessity of Godly labor as a creation ordinance. More concisely, or in verbiage we are familiar

working as unto the Lord. We see the first mention of work in

Genesis 2:15

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Moses is showing us that the earth was given to man, but with the condition, that he should occupy himself in its cultivation.

The logic then follows that man was created to employ himself in some work, and not to simply lie down in inactivity and

idleness. What also follows is this was God's design so it was

also to be delightful and what we are meant for. Work was NOT created for the sole purpose of creating trouble and exhaustion in us. It would be contrary to Gods creation, and therefore nature, for man to spend his life only eating, drinking, and sleeping without also finding something for us to work at. Consider the custody of the garden that was given, therein we also see the design of work. The Garden also shows us a key aspect of work which is stewardship. God entrusted Adam with care of the garden and to work at it and at the heart of that is a stewardship issue. We are to look at the garden, a sort of economy if you will, as requiring diligence and respect to the good things that God has given us to enjoy and to flourish among us. We are all to regard ourselves as stewards of God in all things in which he possesses which is all things. If we

consider ourselves as stewards it will keep us from on the one hand idleness and the other pride.

The verse I most recall towards work comes after the fall in 3:19

17 And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife

and have eaten of the tree

of which I commanded you,

‘You shall not eat of it,’

cursed is the ground because of you;

in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your face

you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground,

for out of it you were taken;

for you are dust,

and to dust you shall return.”

Here we see what happens to work after the fall. “sweat” is understood as hard labor and full of fatigue and that which makes one tired. In this passage God is speaking to mankind from his judgement seat letting him know that the life of a man will be difficult because Adam proved unworthy of the tranquil, happy, and joyful state for which he had been created. So, we

now know that we are made to work, that idleness is contrary to God's design, but we also know that it will be difficult. The sort of Utopian state of work has been lost as a consequence of sin.

It is an important to note that the curse is NOT the cause of labor: it is the frustration and pain connected with labor that man will encounter. I think a great example of this is Noah.

Noah has the skill and talents to labor at building the ark which was after the fall. Then, what does Noah right after the flood in

Genesis 9:20

Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard

Noah didn't immediately take a vacation, of which he would

hardly have needed an oceanfront one! He began to work the

soil and plant a vineyard which evidently suited his purposes, talents, and interest.

An additional worthy consideration of the necessity of labor is the 4th commandment:

Keep the Sabbath day holy.

It should not be forgotten that this is the commandment of labor as well as of rest. Exodus 20:9

9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,

The fact that we are to keep the day of rest also naturally includes the six days of work. The day of rest can have no meaning apart from the six days of labor. And the cycle of labor is as irreversible as the cycle of rest. This is God's design, his framework is for man to occupy himself beyond eating,

drinking, and sleeping and labor is not only a duty but a blessing.

Warning Against Idleness II Thessalonians 3:6-11

6 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this

command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11

For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.

Idleness is not part of God's design for man. The implications of this passage are clear that a mark of those who believe in Jesus Christ labor to earn our livelihood and provide for those who by reason of kinship are dependent on us. We are to work with quietness and eat our own bread. We have all heard of Christians being accused of being lazy. Too often the principle upon which we stand is not the maximum effort we can put forth but the minimum necessary to escape criticism or consequence. I believe this to be largely impacted by culture. A question we ought to ponder is this. How can we expect our society and culture around us to have dignity, uphold

obligations, and display honest labor if the church itself is showing little toil in fulfilling its vocation?

What path of life and type of work each individual is to follow is to be determined by the gifting that has been bestowed to you and therefore is a divine call. Each person is to see their labor as a divine call within God's framework. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 says

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

We are to perform our work or service, not to please man, but unto God. Now this may result in pleasing men and the worldly benefits that go along with it, or it may not. But, our perspective, our aim is to do it unto the Lord. If we work to please men then the final goal we are after is expediency. And

when expediency becomes our rule of life then God loses both sanction and sanctity and the workman can be ready for all types of compromise. God is the first principle of labor, and it alone is the guardian of virtue for all economic structure.

How do we choose a vocation? Vocation comes to us

1. God gives us gifts
2. Spirit enabling us to discern those gifts through self examination and through the confirmation of others in the church
3. God providing opportunities for us to develop and exercise those gifts

4. God providing wisdom so that we can use those gifts in ways that glorify him, and build his kingdom, fulfill his mandates, and allow us to enjoy him forever

Labor is part of Gods design for mankind. Mankind is not to be idle. Prior to the fall work was to be significant and joyful.

After the fall man is still meant to work but it will bring about hardship because of the fall. Christians should have the strongest work ethic in our society and it should allow us to engage those around us on a deeper level. We are to discern the gifts we have been given to find a vocation that we can work hard and glorify God.