



Dr. Harold & Myrna
Carpenter

TEXT: Genesis 3:17-23

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return." Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all [the] living. And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

Genesis 3:17-23

INTRODUCTION:

This is Labor Day week-end. It is a rather nice holiday. It requires no preparation, no cards to be sent, no gifts to be purchased and wrapped, a no special meals to be prepared.

It comes just as the hottest days of summer have passed and the cold winds and snows of

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winter have not yet come.

For the student who has just gone back to school it is like one last fling of vacation.

For the worker it is one last chance to enjoy a weekend on the lake or to finish the "Honey-do" jobs left undone around the house.

It is a holiday that recognizes the positive moral value of the work that you do day after day throughout the year. It says "Yes, you are important, and the work that you do is important. It is important to you; it is important to your family; it is important to society; and it is important to God.

This morning I would like to look at various conceptions and misconception about labor or work.

I. SOME COMMON CONCEPTIONS ABOUT WORK

A. It is the curse of sin.

Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Genesis 3:17-19

1. Moses in Psalm 90

For we have been consumed by Thine anger, And by Thy wrath we have been dismayed. Thou hast placed our iniquities before Thee, Our secret [sins] in the light of Thy presence. For all our days have declined in Thy fury; We have finished our years like a sigh. As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is [but] labor

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and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Thine anger, And Thy fury, according to the fear that is due Thee? So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:7-12

2. Solomon in Ecclesiastes 2

So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity (Ecclesiastes 2:17-19).

3. Job in chapter 7

"Is not man forced to labor on earth, And [are not] his days like the days of a hired man? "As a slave who pants for the shade, And as a hired man who eagerly waits for his wages, So am I allotted months of vanity, And nights of trouble are appointed me.

Job 7:1-3

B. The Greek concept of work

1. The Greek word translated work is *ponos*, meaning "pain, suffering, and hard work."
2. *Ponos* is related to *poneros*, meaning "bad, evil, worthless, rotten, and painful."
3. To the Greeks, manual labor was for slaves. Free men only pursued warfare, large scale commerce, and the arts.
4. The ignorant masses labored so that the elite minority might engage in pure exercises of the mind—philosophy, politics, and art.
5. Plato's Republic is a classic example of this culture in which stature and leadership was based on the work a person didn't have to do.

C. The Roman concept of work

1. The Romans essentially adopted the their belief system from the culture of the Greeks and held labor in very low regard.
2. Slavery became the dominant element of the Roman Empire. Slaves were viewed as cattle and chattel, with no rights as human beings.
3. For the Romans, work was to be done by slaves and only two occupations were suitable for free men—agriculture and big business. The goal of these endeavors was to achieve an "honorable retirement in rural peace as a country gentleman."
4. To pursue handicrafts or work as a hired hand was considered vulgar, dishonoring, and beneath the dignity of a Roman citizen.

D. The Protestant Work Ethic

1. The Protestant Work Ethic held that:
 - a. A person should work in a chosen occupation with an attitude of service to God.
 - b. Work is a calling and no job has more spiritual dignity than another.
 - c. Diligence and profit are highly desirable.
 - d. Punctuality is a virtue and should be faithfully practiced.

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e. Success in one's occupation is a sign of God's approval. 2. Max Weber coined the term "Protestant Ethic" and included in it the key elements of:

- a. Diligence
- b. Punctuality
- c. Deferment of gratification.

Illustration: H. C. Morrison, missionary to China for thirty years and President Teddy Roosevelt, who had gone big game hunting in Africa, arrived home via ship. A large crowd welcomed the president, but Missionary Morrison did not receive a welcome. Missionary Morrison said to the Lord that it was just not right.

The Lord answered him, "You are not home yet!" d. Primacy of the work domain. E. Marxist Socialism

1. The Industrial Revolution brought with it long hours and harsh working conditions.
2. Karl Marx, a German Jew, was from a family of Rabbis.
3. His family converted to Lutheranism so that Karl's father could hold a job as judge.
4. Karl Marx studied Law, philosophy, and economics.
5. He worked for less than one year as a newspaper editor. The newspaper failed
6. Marx went to Paris where he met Friedrich Engels, a son of wealthy factory owners.
7. Marx never worked again in his life. He was supported by Engel's family wealth.
8. Marx dedicated himself to writing against capitalism while being supported by it.
9. Marx contended that history would evolve into a perfect socialist state in which all work would be of equal value and the produce of work would be shared equally by all.
10. There were two major flaws in his writings:
 - a. Not all work is of the same value.
 - b. Not all men have the same morals or ethics.
11. Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, wrote a book called *The Right to Be Lazy* while in prison for theft. [Here are some wrong arguments that he proposed:]
 - a. The thoroughbred in Rothschild's stables and the plow horse. [The thoroughbred did not work and was worth more than the plow horse that worked.]
 - b. The "noble savage" and the workman as a slave to a machine.
 - c. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: **"The lilies neither toil nor labor."**
 - d. "Jehovah, the bearded angry god gave his worshipers the supreme example of laziness; after six days of work, he rests for all eternity." He should [have] read Eph. 4:28, Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have [something] to share with him who has need.

II. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF LABOR

A. Labor is not the result of the Fall. It is a part of God's eternal plan for mankind. Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. Genesis 2:15

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And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:28 B. The Curse only makes labor more difficult and less fruitful:

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return." Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all [the] living. And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

Genesis 3:17-23 C. Biblical purposes for labor:

1. God ordained

'Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; [in it] you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

Deuteronomy 5:13-14

2. To provide food

He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth,

Psalms 104:14

Man goes forth to his work And to his labor until evening.

Psalms 104:23

3. To provide for one's family

7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.

I Timothy 5:7-8

4. To avoid poverty

In all labor there is profit, But mere talk [leads] only to poverty. Proverb 14:23

5. To provide a sense of self worth

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There is nothing better for a man [than] to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.
Ecclesiastes 2:24

I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime;
moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God.
Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

To be able to share with those in need

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what
is good, in order that he may have [something]
to share with him who has need.
Ephesians 4:28

7. To give glory to God

The righteous is a guide to his neighbor, But the way of the wicked leads them astray. A slothful
man does not roast his prey, But the precious possession of a man [is] diligence. In the way of
righteousness is life, And in [its] pathway there is no death.
Proverbs 12:26-28

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as
those who [merely] please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do,
do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will
receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does
wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without
partiality. Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master
in heaven.
Colossians 3:22-4:1

and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with
your hands, just as we commanded you; so that you may behave properly toward outsiders
and not be in any need.
1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work ,
neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing
no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the
Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do
not grow weary of doing good.
2 Thessalonians 3:10-13

This is the outline of the sermon Dr. Harold Carpenter preached 31 August 2003 in the morning
service. Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also

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taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He then served as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity—Peter Meiderlin
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