

Walk Worthy

of the calling with which you were called.
Ephesians 4:1-5:21

PART TWO – WALK IN TRUTH – EPH. 4:17-32
LESSON 28 – WORKING FOR GOOD – EPH. 4:28
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Ephesians 4:25-32

- ▶ 25 Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. 26 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. **28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.** 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Right Reasons

- ▶ Continuing in our study as we have been examining Ephesians 4:17-32 to see how a saved man walks, thinks, lives, talks, and acts differently than the lost man, we see that the saved man has different motives, a different attitude, and a different outlook on how he lives his life. Not only is the saved man endowed with a new heart, a new mind, and a new spiritual life, he is also empowered to fulfill God's purposes.
- ▶ After seeing how a saved man speaks the truth and can be angry for the right reasons and in the right way, we now see in verse 28 that a saved man is to work with the right attitudes and for the right reasons. The admonition begins with the command, "Let him who stole steal no longer."

Do Not Steal

- ▶ As lost men and women we often were guilty of stealing, taking what is not ours. Whether it is money, possessions, or some other thing, or perhaps we take the credit and the praise when it does not belong to us. The temptation is there for the saved as well, but we have been given reasons not to steal.
- ▶ First, of course, stealing is a form of deception. Taking what is not ours out of selfish greed and envy. The root is pride, and the fruit is theft.
- ▶ This clearly violates God's law. "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex 20:15) is only one of the Ten Commandments, but it is nonetheless a Law of God. Do not steal. It is indeed tied with deception in Leviticus 19:11, "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another."

Work

- ▶ Secondly, while we know that stealing is an easy way to fulfill our needs, we must not forget that God has ordained that our needs be met through work!
- ▶ Ah, there it is. A four letter word in its own right. W-O-R-K. How many of us detest our job? We do not always enjoy hard work. It's HARD, and it's WORK.
- ▶ But we must be careful. There are some who proclaim that work is part of the curse – that after Adam and Eve sinned they were put out of the garden and it became necessary for them to work to survive. And that is where many are today – they work to survive. But let's look at this, shall we?

Work

- ▶ The Bible is clear in showing us that God had assigned work to Adam and Eve before the fall (Gen 1:15, 19). Work has always been part of God's plan for us. Of course, since Adam sinned, now we have a wrong attitude often toward work since it is after all God ordained! What changed?
- ▶ In the curse for sin, the work that Adam was ordained to do became difficult. Now Adam was doomed to die, for the wages of sin is death. God told Adam and Eve that if they trespassed His command they would indeed die.

Hard Work

- ▶ In seeing the result of sin then we hear God tell Adam: “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, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3:17-19).
- ▶ Now work is hard. It is toil. It requires sweat. But none of this changes the fact that in order to provide for the survival of the family, it is necessary for people to work. This is God’s ordained plan for us.

Work as Unto the Lord

- ▶ That is why we are told in the New Testament to work as unto the Lord, because ultimately as believers we do all that we do for Him! We do not work merely to please our earthly boss – we work to glorify God.
- ▶ As John MacArthur put it, our jobs give us a place to earn a living, meet our family's needs, and it gives us a daily mission field in which to live and proclaim the gospel.
- ▶ Paul elsewhere in the Scriptures examines work. He writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11, “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.”
- ▶ And in 1 Timothy 5:8 he wrote, “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.”

The Way We Work

- ▶ The way that we work and our attitude toward work both say much about our spiritual maturity and our faith. In the church we are to minister to one another to be sure, but we are also to encourage each other in working and providing for our families. But there is another reason we are to work, and our verse for today tells us exactly why God has ordained that we work, and that we work hard.
- ▶ The Scripture tells us to labor and work doing “what is good.” In other words we should not just take any job we can find. We are required to be picky in our job search and in choosing our career, because we are exhorted to work at what is good.
- ▶ The word “good” means that which is healthy, or promotes health and goodness. We cannot engage in a job that is evil, that harms, or that is not good. And if there is a doubt about whether our job is good or not then we should err on the side of safety. A believer should never engage in a job that promotes evil or sin or causes harm to others.

Working to Survive?

- ▶ The foundational truth that we see here is not that we work at what is good only to survive. Working to survive is in actuality quite selfish. The Bible here teaches us that we work at what is good so that we “may have something to give him who has need.”
- ▶ Our motive in working is to provide for our family and the family of God. It is to care for orphans and widows, the needy and poor in our midst, the “least of these My brethren.”
- ▶ This is not a social gospel or a focus on giving to the world. That is different. This has a specific application within the church. We should be good stewards and work hard so that when a need arises in our midst we can pitch in and help meet that need. Have you ever thought about your job as an opportunity to meet the needs of those around you in your church?

Work to Give

- ▶ This is the New Testament example though, is it not? In Acts 2:44-45 we see that early Christians would even sell their own possessions in order to meet the needs of others in the Body.
- ▶ To take it a step further, beyond working to only survive, Paul commended the Philippian church because they sent a gift to the church at Jerusalem. The church at Philippi was poor and needy, but they saw that the church in Jerusalem was being persecuted and so they gave, even as they had needs of their own.

Give Even When You Have Needs

- ▶ Can you imagine working to give away what you made even while you yourself still had needs? What kind of faith is this? It is a faith that sees that God promises to meet our every need. He is the Source for meeting every need we have. And He uses His bride, the church, as the Resource to provide what is needed.
- ▶ Even if we are needy ourselves, we can work and give so that other's needs are met. And we will wait on God in faith trusting that He will meet our needs too.

Blessed Enough to Give

- ▶ In 2 Corinthians 8:14 we see that when we are blessed, we can give to help those with lack. And then when we have lack, others who have abundance can give to meet our needs.
- ▶ Many have made the church today such a market driven business that we have completely overlooked the purpose for God's blessing, for work, and even His purposes in our neediness.
- ▶ So work is not a bad word. It is God's program for providing for our needs and for giving us an opportunity to minister to others. By working at what is good we can then give to help those who are in need.

How Do You View Work?

- ▶ The outlook and attitude here is not inward. It is not selfishness. It is not working only to survive. It is working to fulfill God's purposes and to be used of Him to meet the needs of others. It is a view that instead of being inward is in fact upward and outward.
- ▶ Do you view work like a lost man or a saved man? Did you know that there was a difference? Remember this the next time you are tempted to complain about your job, and instead thank God for giving you an opportunity to meet the needs of others and obey Him in your attitudes, actions, and in your work.
- ▶ Thank Him for placing you in a mission field where you can be a Resource to others in the church and a witness of the power of the gospel to those with whom you work.

Next Week

- ▶ Lesson 29 - Speaking Edification and Grace – Eph. 4:29-30