

A Work Ethic: Imitators of God

August 25, 2019

- I. After my last teaching in May that touched on the pitfalls of laziness versus the benefits of following in the upright ways of God, as elders, we thought it would be good to go over a series of messages related to God's thinking on work and how it impacts our entire life.
 - A. This will be a multi-part series that actually began with my last message on the Lazy person and sluggard versus righteous person.
 - B. The messages will expand on my introduction about the basis of a theology of work or work ethic. Ultimately, I will talk about how it impacts our retirement.
 - C. In this message, I hope that you will see that the purpose of work is all about displaying the glory and character of God.
 - D. There are more than 600 verse references that use some form of the word for "work", so I could have gone about this in so many different ways, but I pray that God will bless you with what is shared today.

- II. God, the Creator is a laborer and He sees work as a good and valuable attribute.
 - A. After the creation of the earth, God rested from His labor and the fourth commandment of The Ten confirms that it was passed on to man as a good thing.
 - i. Gen 2:2-3 - By the seventh day God completed 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.
 - a) We see that work is a verb; an action word; a "doing" word. God is not passive about His creation; He is actively involved.
 - "which He had done" - accomplishment
 - "God had created and made" - effects and results (cause & effect)
 - b) Work is not and was not intended to be a "dirty" word, but a fulfilling part of our life here on earth. I want to correct any errant thinking that work or labor in general is cursed.
 - c) Work was given to man in the image of God before the fall (Gen 1-2). Then, after the original sin and fall in Gen 3, God placed the curse upon the ground. Instead of the easy growing in the garden of Eden, men would need to toil in the earth in order to be able to eat crops and food made from it.
 - ii. Ex 20:8-10a - "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 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,..."
 - a) God designed our world so that 6 out of 7 days - 86% of the days were working days. That's a high majority!
 - b) The same word in Hebrew that means "work" is used in Gen 1:7 and translated "made"; Being the Creator implies being a worker!
 - c) In Ex 20:6, the second of the ten commandments which are a couple of verses before the fourth commandment about work and the Sabbath, this same word for "work" is translated "showing" and it references that God's "work" is about showing or demonstrating lovingkindness to those who obey Him. **This is the heart of God when it comes to work!**

- B. When we talk about the results of God's working as being the works of God, we see that all of God's works are characterized by faithfulness to His promises and covenants.
 - i. Ps 33:4 For the word of the Lord is upright, And all His work is *done* in faithfulness.
 - ii. God's work glorifies and exalts His faithfulness.
 - iii. We are called to celebrate and praise God's works and praise Him for working.
 - a) Ps 8:1,3-4 O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?
 - iv. So we praise the glory of God that all of His work is done in faithfulness and that all of His works, which are the result of His faithful working, show off His majesty and splendor!

III. Showing that the entire trinity is working - Although I could use many different passages, I will be using selected passages from the Gospel of John for continuity.

A. Jesus talked about His Father working until now

- i. **John 5:17** But He answered them, "My Father is **working** until now, and I Myself am **working**."
- ii. **John 5:20** For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater **works** than these, so that you will marvel.

B. Jesus talked about about Himself, the Son, working.

- i. **John 5:36** But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the **works** which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very **works** that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. **This is about bringing glory to the Father through the works and working/accomplishing of the Son.**
- ii. John 10: 25, 32, 37, 38 [Let's look at the section in John 10 which Steve Altman read earlier.]
 - a) Jesus is doing the work.
 - b) The work is indicative of the Father - it is exactly what He has been doing for centuries for His people. Feeding them from nothing (manna, quail - bread and fish), Healing the sick (Naman - many), raising the dead (Elisha and son of the widow - son of the widow of Naan),
 - c) It testifies to things that only God can do!

C. The Holy Spirit is a worker

- i. John 14:10-11 Jesus reaffirming His works are of the Father.
- ii. Leads to John 15:16 about the name of the Holy Spirit - the **Helper** - being an indication that **He would work on their behalf** as "one called along side.
- iii. John 16:8-10 is about the convicting work of the Spirit.

IV. Being imitators of God as workers

- A. Paul exhorts the Ephesians "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;" and commended the Thessalonian believers saying, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord,"

- B. In conclusion, I would like to step back through some passages in John 14 and 15 for the purpose of helping us see how this is God's desire for us expressed in the Scriptures.
- i. John 14:10-12 focusing on verse 12
 - a) The works He did in the presence of the disciples and Apostles were to testify that Jesus was sent by the Father.
 - b) Earlier in John 6:29 Jesus had said to them “This is **the work of God, that you believe** in Him whom He has sent.” He is reminding them of that right here during their last major teaching before His crucifixion.
 - c) In verse 12, the climax is that they will become workers of the works of God as Jesus was and testify with the wonderful works of God, the Father.
 - d) Working the work from God, the Father, to Jesus, the Son, to those who do the work of believing in Jesus.
 - e) And where does the ability and power to believe in Jesus come from?! The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit! [1 Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **by the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood]
 - f) So the circle is completed!! It begins and ends with the workings of God!!!
 - ii. In John 15:18-26, Jesus continues His final discourse with the disciples as He prepares them for their new and ongoing relationship to the nonbelieving world.
 - a) The section ends this way. John 15:26-27 **[Read this.]**
 - b) The Helper will do the work of helping us to do the work of testifying or, in other words, displaying and glorifying or exalting the character of our beloved Lord, God Almighty!
 - iii. Jesus' High Priestly prayer begins with this in John 17:4 “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”
 - a) May this be our hearts' desire as well.
- C. I would like to finish by reading a devotional by John Piper that is titled ***God Works for You.***

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:18-22