THE WORK OF WISDOM

**DATE: 4/10/2016 pm**

**TEXT: Proverbs 10: 4, 5, 16, 26**

**INTRODUCTION**

What does the Bible say about a work ethic?

What is a Christian’s work ethic supposed to be?

**Colossians 3:23 – 25 *– “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;” “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons”***

In essence, this is the Christian work ethic

We are commanded to put forth our best efforts, to work from our heart at whatever we do, as to the Lord

We are accountable to God and stewards of the gifts He has given us

Our work ethic flows out of our gratefulness to God

God instituted work with creation, prior to the Fall

**Genesis 2:15 *– “And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it”***

After Adam and Eve sinned, work became toil

**Genesis 3:17-19 …**

But work itself is included in the ***“very good”*** part of creation

**Genesis 1:31a *– “And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good”***

Throughout the OT, God gave the Israelites specific instructions about how to do their work

He also gave instructions about providing for those who had less

**Leviticus 23:22 *– “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God”***

This command confirms the importance of work

God does not tell the people to harvest everything and then simply give food to the poor

Instead, He tells them to leave enough of the grain to allow the poor to work for themselves

Ruth is a perfect example of this, she gleaned in Boas’ field

Work has a way of giving us a sense of purpose, dignity and productivity

The Apostle Paul emphasized the value of industry …

When he said in **II Thessalonians 3:10 – “*If any would not work, neither should he eat”***

That is, the refusal of an able bodied man to work should face the consequence that he will lack food

Paul and his companions set a good example of hard work

**II Thessalonians 3:7, 8 –** ***“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;” “Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:”***

Christians should work hard

Work is integral to life, and approaching work as *God given* will give us more pleasure in it

We can work cheerfully and without complaint because we are working for the Lord who loves us and has redeemed us

A good work ethic can also be a witness to others

**Matthew 5:16 *– “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”***

The world takes notice of our efforts and wonders why we do what we do

This attitude is not the attitude in society today

**Ill.** As an example is a man by the name of John Kenneth Galbraith, a Democratic economist who said – *“Those who dislike working should not be forced to work nor should they be penalized by depriving them of the benefits of society”*

**Ill.** The beginning of an essay penned by Bob Black in 1985 entitled “The Abolition of Work” read, *“No one should ever work. Work is the source of nearly all the misery in the world. Almost any evil you'd care to name comes from working or from living in a world designed for work. In order to stop suffering, we have to stop working.”*

Such thinking curses society

In a leisure-loving culture, many would wholeheartedly echo these men’s sentiment

Americans spend approximately 50 percent of their waking hours devoted to work

Is work a curse, or is it something that humans were uniquely designed to do?

In stark contrast to the assertions of man like Black & Galbraith,

The significance and beneficial nature of work is a resounding theme in the Bible

The Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes contain some of the wisest sayings regarding work

**Proverbs 14:23 –** ***“In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury”***

**Proverbs 6:6-11 – *“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise” “Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,” “Provideth her meat in the summer,***

***… and gathereth her food in the harvest” “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?” “Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:” “So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, (vagabond, homeless wander)) and thy want as an armed man” (robber)***

**Ecclesiastes 9:10 –** ***“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”***

The Bible confirms a strong work ethic, while warning against idleness

Let’s pray and think on this thought tonight …

**“The Work of Wisdom”**

Found in **Proverbs** chapter **10**

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. THE “SUPPORT FOR” WORK – v. 4**

***“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich”***

Two categories of individuals are described

One is Lazy / the other is Diligent

The former leads to Poverty

The latter leads to Prosperity

Much of today’s poverty is caused by nothing more than a lack of self-discipline and laziness

Rather, he (or she) who rises early and works long and

hard, conscientiously, diligently, will quickly rise above the poverty level

Diligence/hard work will put meals on the table

Work supports the family

Sloth weakens the family

The key word in this verse is ***“hand”***

The Bible has a lot to say about the hands

(I can’t get into all of it)

The hands represent work in a profession or manual labor

**I Thessalonians 4:11 *– “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;”***

**A. *“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand:”***

Poverty has its roots in sloth / laziness

(A dislike of work, or any kind of physical exertion)

The word “***dealeth”*** carries the idea of *activity*

*It refers to a purpose in mind*

What the lazy do, they do on purpose

They are not born that way

(Which seems to be the *pat* answer today)

**Proverbs 21:25 *– “The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour”***

***“Slack hand”*** speaks of idleness

They picture a person sitting on their hands rather than serving with them

Not enabling their hands to do what they should do

**B. *“but the hand of the diligent maketh rich”***

***“Diligent”*** – mean *persistent and hard-working*

This indicates a readiness to give the best effort

It does not try to find a way out of work nor does it have to be prodded to begin

It knows the value of time and puts every minute to the most economical use

It is a mind that is focused on the work and hands filled with the work

The Bible tells us Job was blessed because of his hard work

**Job 1:10 –** ***“Hast not thou made an hedge about him,***

***…and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land”***

**THE “SUPPORT FOR” WORK**

**II. THE “STEWARDSHIP IN” WORK – v. 5**

***“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame”***

**A Steward –** is *someone who guides or directs something in an acceptable way*

The key here is the timing of what is done and when

One *gathers*, the other *sleeps*

We have like-sayings,

-- *“Make hay while the sun shines”*

-- *“Strike the iron while it is hot”*

Both say the same things

Farmers know that harvest time is serious

**A.** ***“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son:”***

This refers to summer’s end when the harvest is gathered

No one goes to all the hard work of tilling, planting, weeding …

Only to leave the crop in the field at the time of harvest

There will be plenty of time in the off season to rest

But not now, it’s harvest time

**Matthew 9:37, 38 *– “Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;” “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest”***

This young man is considered a ***“wise son”*** because he is willing to work

**B.** ***“but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame”***

One who sleeps in harvest is one who wastes valuable time

Lets work go undone, and looks for every opportunity to take a break

The wise son makes hay while the foolish son misses honor

His laziness brings him a loss of respect

Do you know people who are lazy?

What do you think of them?

He is not only shameful, but will always be on the bottom of the economic ladder

Then … they want everyone else to bail them out

**THE “SUPPORT FOR” WORK**

**THE “STEWARDSHIP IN” WORK**

**III. THE “SPENDING FROM” WORK – v. 16**

***“The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin”***

The diligent work of a just man indeed tends to life or prosperity

In contrast, the fruit or the natural product of the ungodly leads to sin and by implication death or at the least, poverty

Work provides for the needs of people

If you work, you have the money to buy the necessities of life

The wicked (sluggard) has more time than money, and spends his time doing evil

Sloth promotes wickedness

**A. *“The labour of the righteous tendeth to life:”***

***“Labor” -*** refers to*work and the wages as the result of it*

The income of righteous labor is the enrichment of life

***“Tendeth”* -** as the *idea of inclination*

It is speaking about *direction*

The labor of those who live right tends to always benefit

Honest work always pays off

And you will benefit from it

**B. *“the fruit of the wicked to sin”***

***“Fruit” -*** indicates *an increase*

It is a product of what has been planted

It refers to a crop or harvest

It can also be used figuratively to speak of yield

A tree bears fruit of its own kind

The fruit can be traced back to its root

The seed planted by the righteous will bring in a harvest of life

The seed planted by the wicked will yield a crop of sin

The efforts of the wicked prove sinful

Anything and everything they do amounts to sin

**Proverbs 21:4 –** ***“An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin”***

**Romans 14:23 *– “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin”***

**THE “SUPPORT FOR” WORK**

**THE “STEWARDSHIP IN” WORK**

**THE “SPENDING FROM” WORK**

**IV. THE “SLUGGARD AT” WORK – v. 26**

***“As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him”***

Employ a sluggard, and he will be an irritant, not a help

Lazy people are like smoke to the eyes or vinegar on the teeth

Smoke causes the eyes to burn and vinegar makes the teeth sensitive

Those who are slothful, irritate those who depend on them, because they either fail to timely complete an assigned task, or they falter in performing their task by doing it in a sloppy fashion, which requires the expense of correction

**A. The Irritation that is Caused – v. 26a**

***“As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,”***

The key issues of this verse are the issues of **Dependability** and **Reliability**

Can your family, your boss, fellow-workers, or your friends depend on you?

Are you a reliable person?

If you lack character, you most likely are not very reliable

Do you keep your word?

Do you show up on time?

Do you show up at all?

Do you pay your bills?

Do you fulfill your responsibilities to the best of your ability?

If you don't do these things, your behavior is annoying and irritating

You are like smoke which is all show, but no substance

Smoke leaves a distasteful smell on everything

The slothful man leaves *irritation, frustration, agitation, limitations,* and a lack of *completion*

Let me ask, what are you leaving in your absence?

When an employer assigns a task,

That task in most cases, is a link in a chain

The task needs to be done so that others can complete their responsibilities after you

If you don't do your job, others cannot do their job

If you do not do your job, it also creates more stress and pressure for those who work with you because they have to complete your task along with their own

They can also lose customers from your sloppiness

This can highly irritates an employer

With the Sluggard …

**B. Only Idleness is Contributed – v. 26b**

***“so is the sluggard to them that send him”***

He takes the job but does not do the job

He does not care when he comes in

And when he is sent on an errand he does not care when he gets back

Lackadaisical people are people without much enthusiasm, energy, or effort

When opportunity comes knocking they are too lazy to get up and open the door

**CONCLUSION**

This is only just a little of what the Bible has to say about Work

There has been much debate recently about societal responsibilities and obligations toward the unemployed, uninsured, and uneducated in our society

While many of those affected by economic downturns truly desire to work and can’t find employment,

There are a number of U.S. citizens who have become generational welfare recipients, preferring to remain on the government dole

It is interesting to note that the biblical welfare system was a system of work

**Leviticus 19:10 *– “And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God”***

The Bible is harsh in its condemnation of laziness

**Proverbs 18:9 *– “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster”***

Paul makes the Christian work ethic abundantly clear

**I Timothy 5:8 *– “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”***

Although God’s original design for work was perverted by sin

God will one day restore work without the burdens that sin introduced

Until the day when the New Heavens and New Earth are set in place,

The Christian’s attitude toward work should mirror that of Jesus

**John 4:34 - *“My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work”***

Work is of no value except when God is in it

**THE “SUPPORT FOR” WORK**

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