

Title: The Gospel at Work

Passage: Ephesians 6:5-9

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Introduction:

Questions of Reflection:

- What is the meaning of your job?
- What is the purpose of you working / doing what you do?
- Is my work shaping myself in a godly character?
- How do we live sold-out for God in what we do (even at work)?
- Why does God have us spend so much of our time doing a particular thing - how does it fit in our journey?

Answer:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ should affect our view of work. We are to advance His kingdom

Theological Observations

- Work is not a result of the Fall (Adam was told to work the garden)

Genesis 2:15

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

- Work has been tainted and affected by sin.

Genesis 3:17-18

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; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

- Work is one of the main means by which we advance God’s kingdom.
 - God created different jobs for us to work and take care of His creation and means by which we can serve Christ.
 - There is no place of creation where God does not say “Mine.” (J. Piper)
 - Each job is unique and important. Each one should do their job that is honoring to God and to others.

Contextual Observations (Ephesians 5)

- Book of Ephesians
 - Two parts: 1) what is the Gospel, 2) practical implications of the Gospel

- Ephesians 5: You recognize Christians because they are Spirit-filled, which is recognized by:
 - They are thankful
 - They have a heart of submission
- Three examples of relationships that reflect Spirit-filled Christians
 - Husbands-wives
 - Parents-children
 - Masters-slaves

Slavery reference

- Questions may come to mind:
 - Why doesn't Paul speak on slavery and outlaw it altogether?
 - Is slavery on the same level of the other two relationships, which are still existent (or conversely, no longer existing)
- In Paul's time, slavery was
 - not racial (in America's time, slavery was racial)
 - nearly half of the population were "slaves"
- In Scripture, Paul did not condone nor approve of slavery (but he did affirm further the commandments with regards to husbands-wives as well as children-parents)
 - Husbands-wives: grounded in creation
 - Parents-children: grounded in both general revelation as well as specific revelation (referenced in Ten Commandments)
 - Slavery: Not a naturally valid or divinely mandated relationship.
- Paul: the Gospel elevated the worth and value of slaves (to be equal in God)

Philemon 1:15-16

For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

- Distinction: accommodation vs. endorsement (there are areas where God accommodated but did not endorse)
 - God accommodated divorce (provided end of marriage in light of sin; but God's endorsement is one to remain in marriage)
 - God accommodated polygamy (but God endorses one man-one woman)
 - Book Reference: "The Book Who Re-made the World."

Exhortations (applicable in employer-employee context)

Duties of Workers

- Glorify God in your work by offering obedience to your employer ("obey")

- employees stand in the same relation to employers as children are to their parents
- employee should willing to do all honest work and not assume you know better than what your boss says/does (analogy: military service)
- Glorify God in your work by offering respect to your employer. (*"fear and trembling"*)
 - Provide proper honor to employer
 - Perspective: employer is ultimately responsible before God. God put your employer over you for a time being.
- Glorify God in your work by working with sincerity (*"with a sincere heart"*)
 - Assume the best, not the worst
- Glorify God in your work by being loyal and working wholeheartedly (*"doing the will of God from the heart"*)
 - Work all the time and give your best (even when supervisor not around).
- Glorify God in your work by working willingly (*"rendering service with a good will as to the Lord"*)
 - Have a good attitude. Why? Unto the Lord.
- Glorify God in your work by working expectingly (*"knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord"*)
 - Work with eternal rewards in mind. Even though see little in near-term rewards, rewards will come if do unto God.

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Book recommendations: "Every Good Endeavor", "The Gospel at Work", "The Book That Made Your World"

Conclusion

Work through Christ, like Christ, for Christ alone

- Work through Christ: empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Work like Christ: follow His example
- Work for Christ: motivation on Him

God has called you specifically to advance His kingdom in your job (whether in the workplace or at home).

Related Verses:

Ephesians 5:15-16

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

1 Timothy 6:1-2

Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the

ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

Proverbs 18:9

Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.

Proverbs 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Proverbs 22:29

Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.