

Work: A Pleasure of Paradise or a Curse of Civilization?

1A. The Calling of Work: Gen. 1:28; 3:17-19

- 1b. Work is demanded by God in paradise: Gen. 1:28
- 2b. Work is designed for human prosperity: Gen. 1:29-31
- 3b. Work is disfeatured by human sin: Gen. 3:17-19
- 4b. Work is developed by early man:

1c. The compliance of work:

- 1d. Abel: Gen. 4:2
- 2d. Cain: Gen. 4:2,17
- 3d. Jabal: Gen. 4:20
- 4d. Jubal: Gen. 4:21
- 5d. Tubal-cain: Gen. 4:22
- 6d. Noah: Gen. 6:14,22

2c. The consequence of work: Gen. 5:29

Benefits

Blessings

- 1d. The natural result of diligent labor is wealth: Gen. 13:2;
27:28,29;30:34
- 2d. Possession of wealth and inheritance of wealth carry no dishonor and may be the direct result of God's blessing: Gen. 27:39

5b. Work is demanded in the Mosaic law: Ex. 20:9

"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work. . ."

1c. Labor is a commanded activity:

2c. Labor is a regular activity:

6b. Work is discussed in great detail:

1c. The vices connected with work:

1d. The vice of idleness--ABSTINENCE from work:

"An idle brain is the devil's workshop."

"Activity may lead to evil, but inactivity cannot lead to good."

"Idleness is the sepulchre of virtue."

"Men are naturally tempted by the devil but an idle man positively tempts the devil."

THINK!
**MAYBE WE CAN
DODGE THIS WORK.**

- 1e. Idleness is a form of impiety: 2 Thess. 3:6,8
- 2e. Idleness results in the vice of being a busybody: 2 Thess. 3:11
- 3e. Idleness is tantamount to a denial of the faith: 1 Tim. 5:8
- 4e. Idleness is worse than infidelity: 1 Tim. 5:8b
- 5e. Idleness frequently parades under the guise of religious devotion: Mark 7:9,13
- 6e. Idleness is a special vice of young women: 1 Tim. 5:11-13
- 7e. Idleness robs people of happiness: Gen. 1:28-31

"Occupation was one of the pleasures of paradise and we cannot be happy without it."

2d. The vice of sloth--AVERSION to work:

1e. Described in Proverbs:

- 1f. Slothfulness is a great waste: Prov. 18:9
- 2f. Slothfulness finds constant excuses: Prov. 22:13
- 3f. Slothfulness makes no preparation: Prov. 6:6
- 4f. Slothfulness is manifested in excessive sleep:
Prov. 6:9-11; 19:15; 26:14

2e. Denounced in the New Testament:

- 1f. By Christ: Matt. 25:26

"His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed."

- 2f. By Paul:

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord Rom. 12:11

"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." 1 Thess. 4:11-12

- 3f. By the author of Hebrews: Heb. 6:12

"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."



PAUL.

3d. The vices of the rich--ADOPTION of a false perspective:

- 1e. Accumulation of ill-gotten gain: James 5:1-3
- 2e. Avarice: 1 Tim. 6:10

3e. Attitude of self-sufficiency: Mark 10:23,25; 1 Tim. 6:17-19

4d. The virtue of work:

1e. Each person's labor is a divine calling: 1 Cor. 7:20

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."

2e. Our life will best be regulated when it is directed toward this mark.

3e. The work of the unsaved, no matter how necessary or noble, is sin: Prov. 21:4

"An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin."

4e. All activity can be performed to the glory of God: 1 Cor. 10:31

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

1f. The injunction:

2f. The implications:

3f. The importance:

7b. Work is discovered by the Reformers:

1c. The New Testament work ethic:

"Christianity has undoubtedly given new vigor and dignity to the belittled world of work. With its penetration of the pagan West, the Christian religion etched a halo, as it were, around man's daily labor. In stead of being just a time-consuming routine, a drab, monotonous sparring for subsistence devoid of ultimate meaning and laden only with burden and uncertainty, the workaday world was now interpreted as a divinely appointed sphere where man as a worker is ordained to glorify God, and in His name to serve his fellow man. Upon the humblest carpenter shop Christianity bestowed something of the radiance of Nazareth; through the tired limbs of even the lowliest slave the Gospel sent a surge of glory." Henry, Aspects of Christian Social Ethics, pp. 31-32

2c. The Roman Catholic work ethic

"It was the Roman Catholic misconception of vocation that prepared the way for the gradual inroads of modern secularism upon the Christian view of work. In the Middle Ages and throughout the centuries, Rome limited the idea of vocation only to the priestly class . . . Such denial of the priesthood of all believers has two important consequences: it excludes the laity from divine service, and it elevates the priesthood above the world of labor." Ibid., p. 36

3c. The Protestant work ethic:

"Over against Rome's distinction between the religious and the secular, which granted spiritual merit only to those in specifically designated religious pursuits, the Reformers insisted that every believer's calling is sacred. The Reformation intention, as Alexander Miller notes, was not to do away with all priests, but rather 'to make all Christians priests.' The layman has a calling in Christ no less than the minister, and the daily labor of both, performed as a consecrated sacrifice, is equally acceptable as spiritual service. On this basis, Martin Luther is said to have liberated not only the monks in the monasteries but all men to fulfill their divine vocation. The Reformation did not eliminate the priesthood but rather did away with a non-priestly laity; every follower of Jesus Christ was reminded anew of his calling to full-time priestly service. This emphasis did not so much secularize the ministry as it sanctified the laity. The Christian workman becomes a priest among his fellowworkers; he serves both God and neighbor by offering God the labor of his hands as a daily sacrifice." Ibid., p. 42.



1d. Luther's position:

"Yet Luther told his followers: 'God even milks the cows through you.' and restored to man's work the music that Christianity first put into the working man's heart. English fishermen and Russian harvesters often broke into song as they labored. And in Iowa, American farmers had a saying that even the cows knew the difference when a dairyman was converted." Ibid., p. 42



2d. Calvin's position:

"It is remarked that the Lord commands every one of us, in all actions of life, to regard His vocation. For He knows with what great inquietude the human mind is inflamed, with what desultory levity it is hurried hither and tither, and how insatiable is its universal confusion being produced by our folly and temerity, He has appointed to all their particular duties in different spheres of life. And that no one might rashly transgress the limits prescribed, He has styled such spheres of life vocations, or callings. Every individual's line of life, therefore, is, as it were, a post assigned him by the Lord, that he may not wander about in uncertainty all his days. . . . He that is in obscurity will lead a private life without discontent, so as not to desert the station in which God has placed him." Calvin's Institutes, III, X,6.



2A. The Conduct in Work: Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-9

Col. 3:22-25

22 "Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And *whatsoever* ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the *reward* of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Eph. 6:5-9

5 "Servants, be obedient to them, that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with *eyeservice*, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8, Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he *receive* of the Lord, *whether he be* bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, *forbearing* threatening: knowing that *your* Master also is in heaven; neither is there *respect* of persons with him.

1b. The action in work:

1c. Obeying:

2c. Obeying in all things:

2b. The attitude in work:

1c. The attitude of work negatively: Not superficiality

1d. Not with eye service

2d. Not as men pleasers

2c. The attitude of work positively: In sincerity

1d. In singleness of heart: Col. 3:22

2d. Heartily: Col. 3:23

3d. With a good mind: Eph. 6:7

3c. The anticipation in work:

1d. Recognition: Eph. 6:6

"Doing the will of God from the heart."

2d. Rewards:

Eph. 6:8 "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

3d. Recompence: Col. 3:24

"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ."



"The inscriptions and drawings in the catacombs discovered in Rome in 1578 depict believers in the course of daily work . . . the Christian movement was not embarrassed by the scarcity of philosophers in its ranks. Nor was it embarrassed because its first disciples included fishermen and a tax-gatherer, and because its greatest apostle was a tentmaker. Had not the Redeemer himself been a carpenter? First generation Christians reflected in daily living the biblically inspired conviction that manual work is noble." Henry, p. 53

3A. The Compensation for Work:

The calling of work makes it wonderful; work belonged to the pleasures of paradise.

The conduct in work makes it a witness; our conduct displays how clearly we see our relationship to Christ as Savior and master.

The compensation for work makes it worthwhile; the rewards are held up for each believer as incentives to diligence.

1b. The suggestion for rewards: Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24

The servants addressed here by Paul are not performing a "spiritual" service but are encouraged in their every-day activity to be faithful because, while their recompense in this life may be minimal or nil, their reward from their "master in heaven" (Eph. 6:9) would be great. While they are on this earth they would hardly have opportunity to attend worship services, they would be unable to organize into a "Slaves for the Savior" organization but they are encouraged to be faithful in everything, because every act, no matter how trite, would ultimately be rewarded. If all things can be done for the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31), then all actions, even eating and drinking, will merit a reward or, if done improperly, will forfeit a reward. The realization of this puts a halo over every action we perform each day. It eliminates the distinction between the secular and the sacred. It sanctifies every-day work. It puts the common laborer on an equal basis with the most prominent pastor or missionary, as far as the value of their work for the Lord is concerned. It should make us look on work as a holy delight rather than a humdrum duty. The biblical view of work is that every action is important, making life a serious matter. Thus, if every action receives a reward, then every action is of greatest significance, whether remuneration or recognition in this life can be expected. Our divine Master keeps records and someday will reward us for each action performed with sincerity and without superficiality.

2b. The setting of rewards:

The judgment seat of Christ

The judgment seat of Christ is one of the most misunderstood prophetic events. Rather than it being a "protestant purgatory," it is a time of rewards when the believer will be decorated for the next event, the marriage of the lamb. While it may be a time of remorse and regret for missed opportunities it is not a time of punishment for sins but a time of rewards for those things done for the Lord. It is a time of triumph rather than tragedy, glory rather than gloom. Though some would use the judgment seat as a club to force people into greater faithfulness, the scriptures hold out the judgment seat of Christ as the crowning event of the faithful life. The Apostle Paul closes the discussion of the judgment seat of Christ in the most lengthy Scripture passage referring to it with these words: "Then shall every man receive praise of God" (I Cor. 4:5c)



JUDGMENT SEAT
OF CHRIST



MARRIAGE OF
THE LAMB

3b. The securing of rewards:

1c. Special rewards:



1d. The wreath of incorruptibility: 1 Cor. 9:25

2d. The wreath of life: James 1:12; Rev. 2:10

3d. The wreath of glory: 1 Peter 5:4



4d. The wreath of righteousness: 2 Tim. 4:8

5d. The wreath of rejoicing: 1 Thess. 2:19



2c. Individual rewards:

1d. "Whatsoever ye do" Col. 3:23

2d. "Every good thing" Eph. 6:8

3d. "Eating and drinking and whatsoever ye do" 1 Cor. 10:13



3c. Universal rewards:

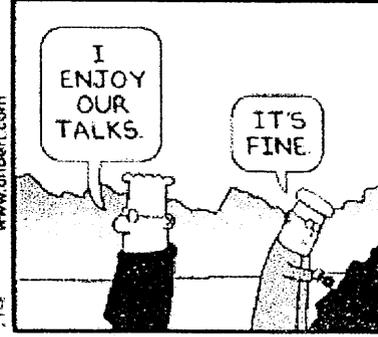
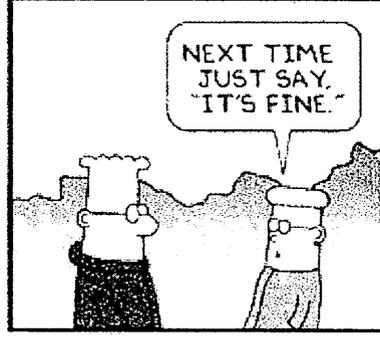
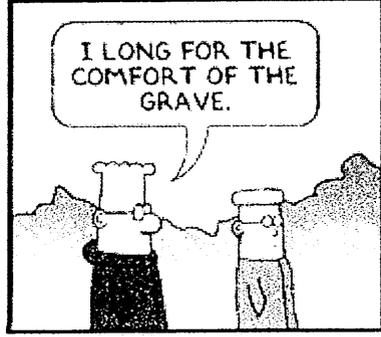
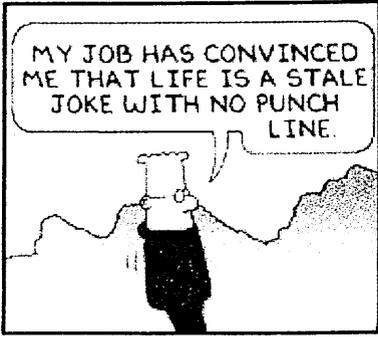
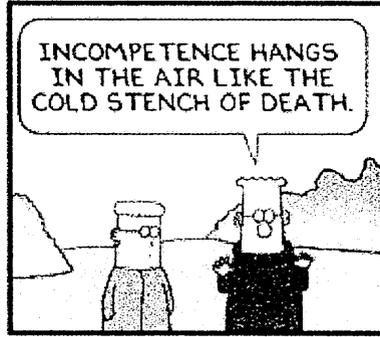
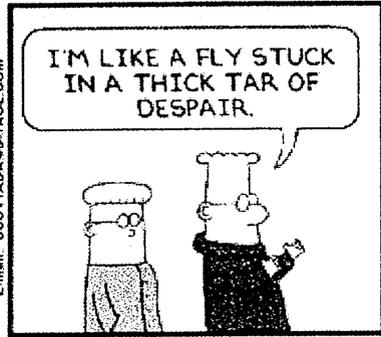
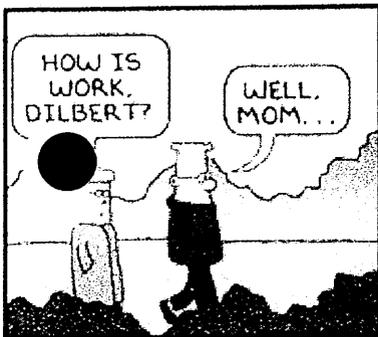
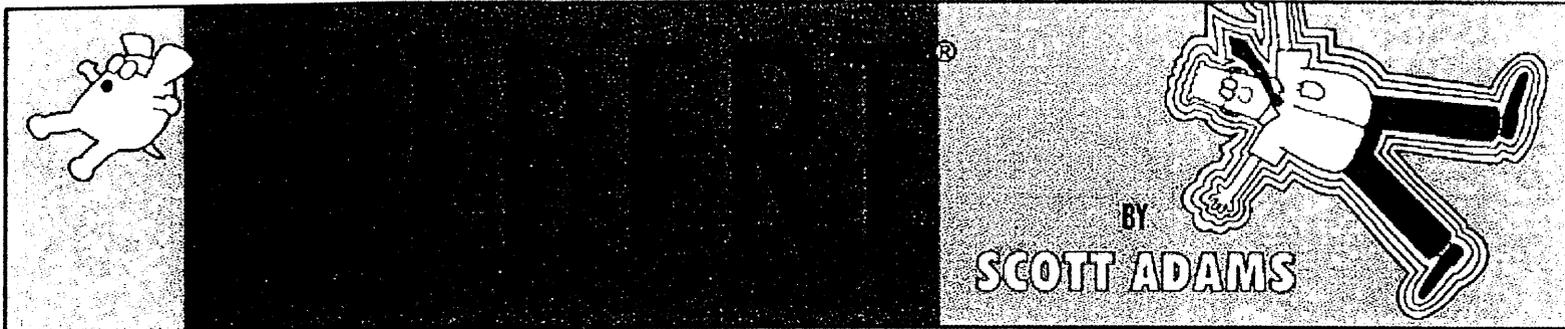
1d. Divine affection: 1 Thess. 4:17

2d. Divine appointment: 1 Cor. 6:2,3

3d. Divine approval: 1 Cor. 4:5

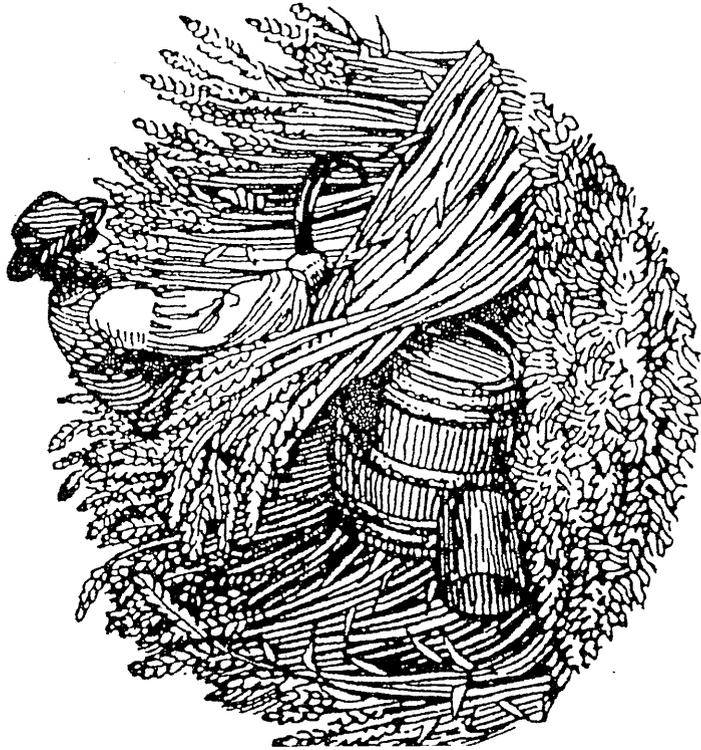
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WHOSE WORK IS MORE IMPORTANT?

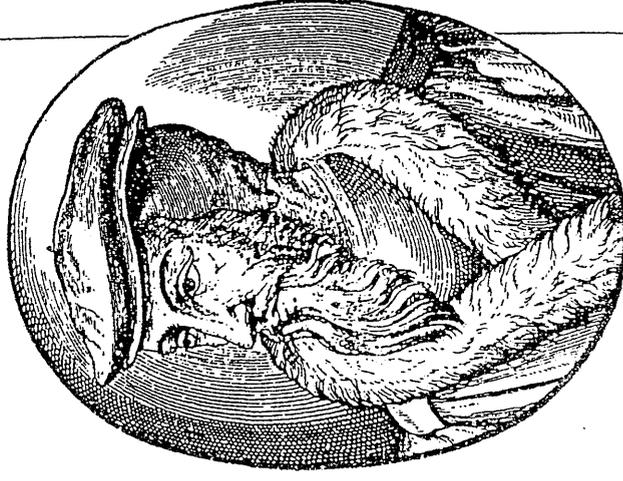
WHO WILL RECEIVE THE GREATER REWARDS?



CALVIN'S POSITION ON WORK:

"It is remarked that the Lord commands every one of us, in all actions of life, to regard His vocation. For He knows with what great inquietude the human mind is inflamed, with what desultory levity it is hurried hither and thither, and how insatiable is its universal confusion being produced by our folly and temerity, He has appointed to all their particular duties in different spheres of life. And that no one might rashly transgress the limits prescribed, He has styled such spheres of life vocations, or callings. Every individual's line of life, therefore, is, as it were, a post assigned him by the Lord, that he may not wander about in uncertainty all his days. . . . He that is in obscurity will lead a private life without discontent, so as not to desert the station in which God has placed him."

Calvin's Institutes, III, X, 6.



CALVIN

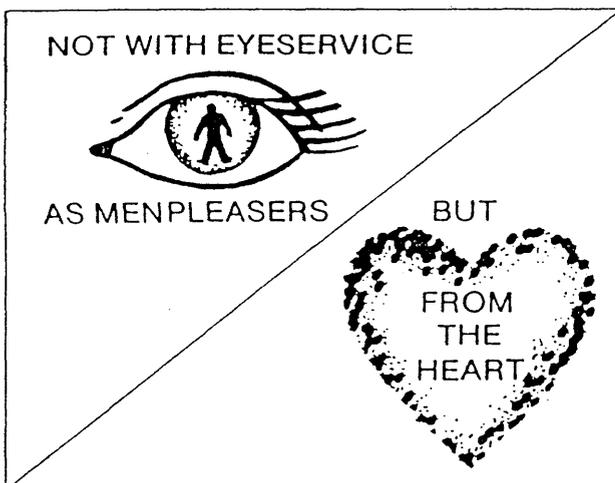
WORK:

humdrum duty or holy delight ??

1. The calling of work makes it _____; work belonged to the pleasures of paradise.
2. The conduct in work makes it a _____; our conduct displays how clearly we see our relationship to Christ as Savior and master.
3. The compensation for work makes it _____; the rewards are held up for each believer as incentives to diligence.

Col 3:22-25 -- Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: ²³ And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; ²⁴ Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Eph. 6:5-9 -- Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ⁶ Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: ⁸ Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. ⁹ And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.



KARDIA

EK PSEUCHĒS

COLOSSIANS 3:22-25

²² Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

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EPHESIANS 6:5-9

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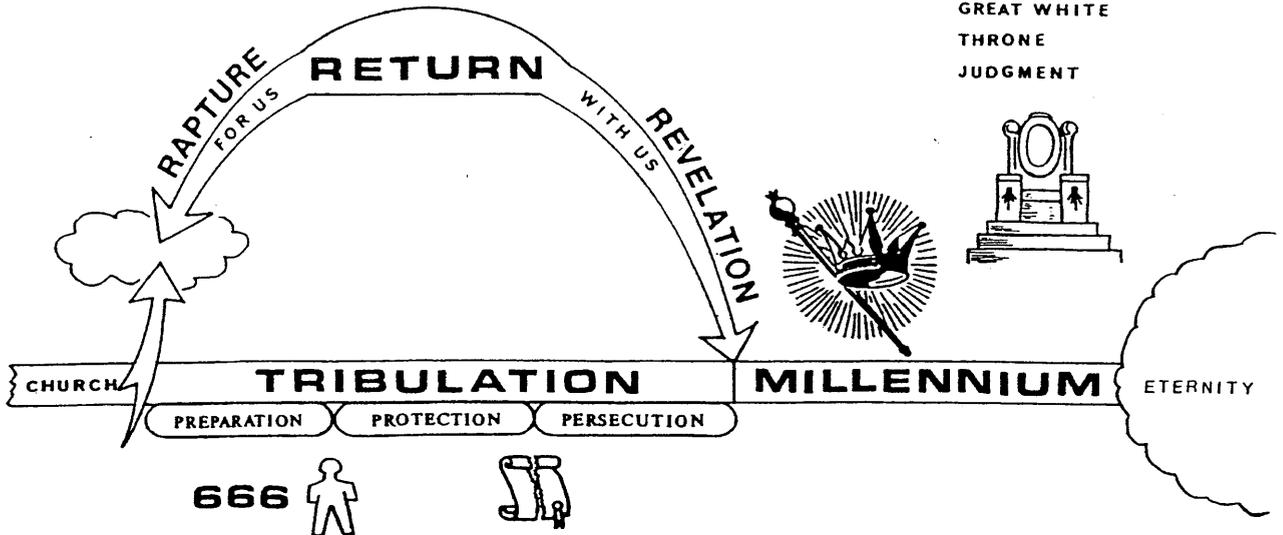
JUDGMENT
SEAT
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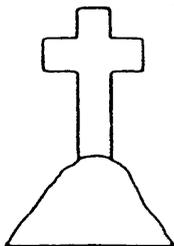


CELEBRATION



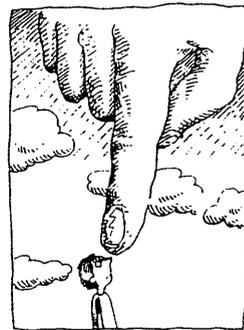
Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

The Believer's 3 Judgments



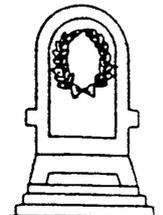
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As a Sinner at the Cross
Gal. 3:13
1 Pet. 2:29



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As a Son During Life
1 Cor.11:31-32
Heb. 12:5-7



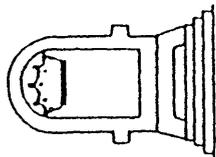
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As Servant at the Bema
Rom. 14:10-12
1 Cor. 4:1-5





**REWARDS FOR
THE BELIEVERS' WORKS**



Judgment Seat of Christ

(The BEMA)

2 Cor. 5:10 - 1 Cor. 3:11-4:5



**Wreath of
Incorruptibility**

1 Cor. 9:25
And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

The Victor's Garland



Wreath of Glory

1 Peter 5:2-4
2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.
3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.
4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Elder's Garland



**Wreath of
Righteousness**

2 Timothy 4:8
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

**For Those Who Love
His Appearing**



**Wreath of
Rejoicing**

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
20 For ye are our glory and joy.

**Soul Winner's
Garland**

Martyr's Garland

DIVINE SERVICES
CONDUCTED HERE
THREE TIMES DAILY



THE BUSY MAN

If you want to get a favor done
By some obliging friend,
And want a promise safe and sure,
On which you can depend,
Don't go to him who always has
Much leisure time to plan;
But if you want your favor done,
Just ask the busy man.

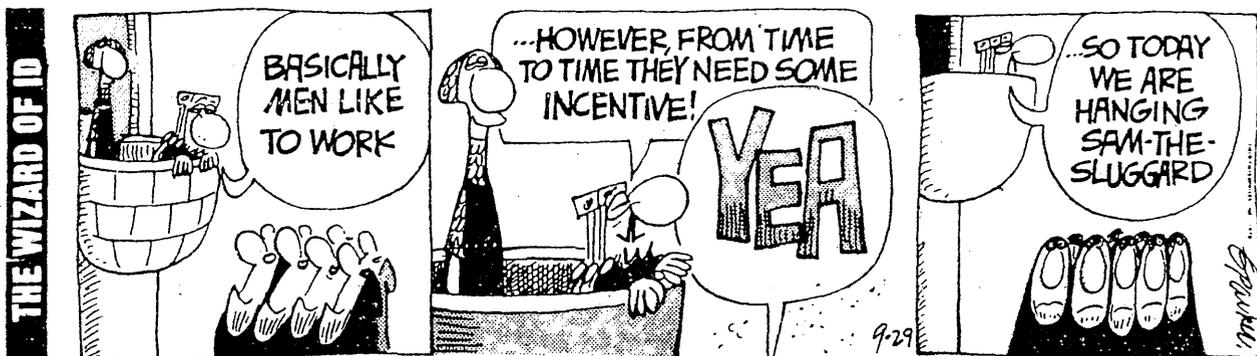
The man with leisure never has
A moment he can spare;
He's always "putting off" until
His friends are in despair.
But he whose every waking hour
Is crowded full of work;
Forgets the art of wasting time;
He cannot stop to shirk.

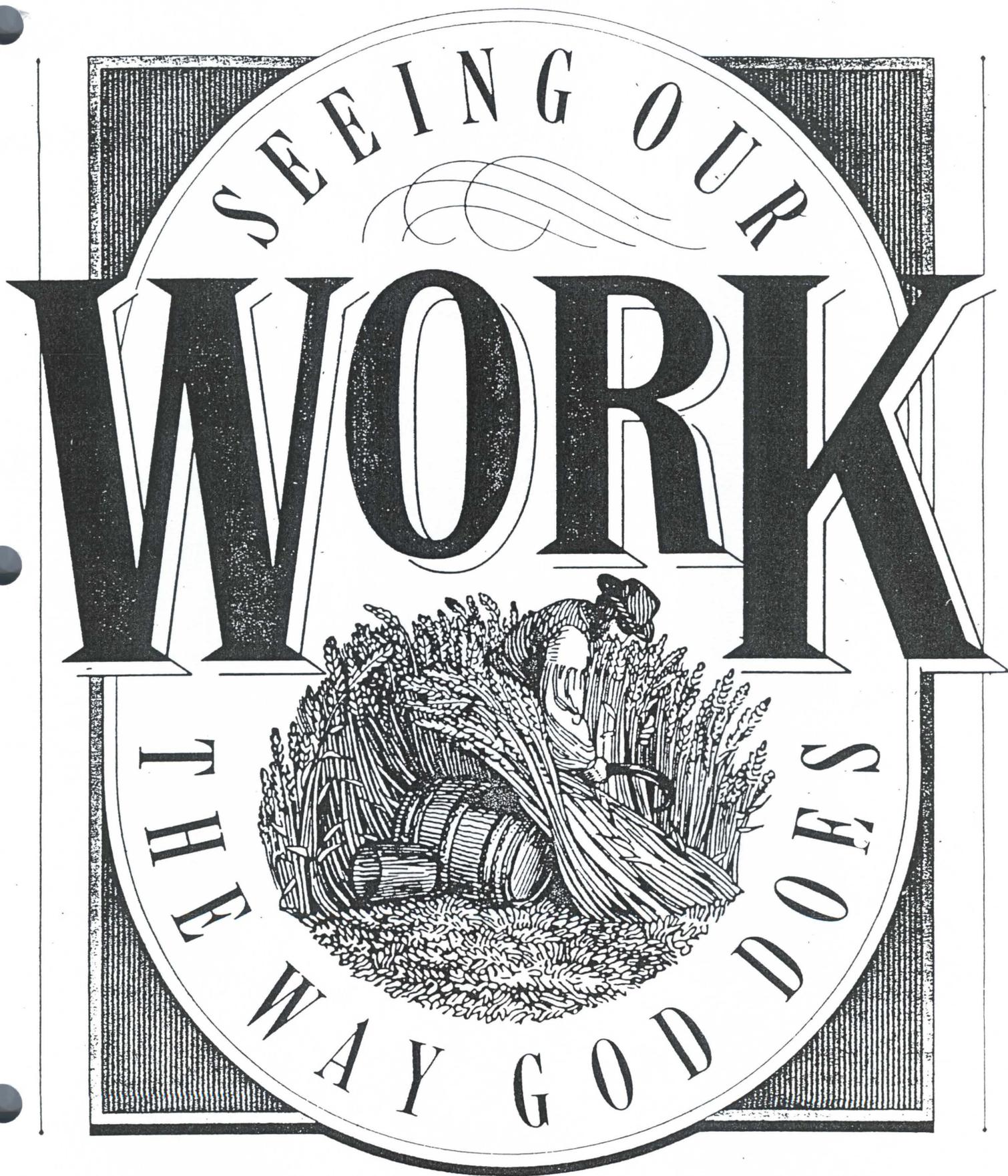
So when you want a favor done,
And want it right away,
Go to the man who constantly
Works sixteen hours a day.
He'll find a moment sure somewhere
That has no other use,
And help you, while the idle man
Is framing an excuse!

-- Author Unknown



"It is said that John Wesley traveled 250,000 miles on horseback...averaging 20 miles a day for 40 years, preached 40,000 sermons, and produced hundreds of books. At 83 he was annoyed that he could not write more than 15 hours a day without hurting his eyes, and at 86 he was ashamed that he could not preach more than twice a day.. He complained that there was an increasing tendency on his part "to lie in bed until 5:30 in the morning." Amazing that Wesley lived to be the same age as Dr. Ketcham when he died.





Mike and Janet's garden was something to behold. Long straight rows of sweet corn, green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, beets, and carrots. Many of the lush plants were bent over from the weight of the harvest. And not a weed in sight.

They were proud of their garden, but uncomfortable about it, too. "We don't spend much time on it," Mike said. "Why, if Christ came back today, the effort would have been wasted." They gardened primarily to have a chance to witness, serving up vegetables and the gospel to their neighbors.

My friends' desire to be faithful to their Lord in the work of their hands is commendable, but their thinking represents a mistaken understanding of work and spirituality. The Reformers, in contrast, taught that every legitimate vocation was pleasing to God. The baker and the minister, the gardener and the scholar all were equally called by God, and each was to approach his work as service rendered to Him.

"The main end of our lives," said the Puritan William Perkins, "is to serve God in the serving of men in the works of our callings."

Unfortunately, we've largely lost this heritage of clear biblical teaching. We speak instead of "careers" or "jobs," ideas we've adopted from the world. Those in "full-time ministry" are "called," while the rest of us are stuck in "secular jobs." Like Mike and Janet in their garden, we try to squeeze in "spiritual" activities around the edges.

We've unconsciously embraced a secularized view of work. If we're to think Christianly about work, we'll need to recover a biblical perspective.

Faithfulness in work means approaching work as part of God's good creation for us.

Work is not something we're stuck with because of sin. The ideal life isn't devoid of work (as my children believe) — Adam was placed in the Gar-

by Denis D. Haack

den "to work it and take care of it" (Gen. 2:15) long before thistles became a problem. He was to exercise creativity and make changes that would reflect something of his ideas, experiments, and personality. Rooted in Creation, not the Fall, work provides both a fulfillment of our humanness and an opportunity to serve God.

God's command also stressed stewardship. The world in which Adam and Eve lived remained the Lord's, and so it was important that they manage it with wisdom, affection, and care.

Every vocation pursued as service to God is part of the spiritual task of pushing back the Fall.

When we sit down to dinner as a family, we pause to give thanks. We express our gratitude to God, acknowledging that He is the source of all good things. Both the work and the income are His good gifts.

Every legitimate vocation is equally acceptable before God.

The Creator intended for us to live as physical creatures in a physical universe, "serving and enjoying Him . . . ruling and enjoying His good world," write the authors of *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience*.

Adam was to "work" the Garden. The Hebrew word means "cultivate," which is related to the idea of culture. Our first parents cultivated the Garden, cultivated relationships with each other

Adapted with permission from The Rest of Success (InterVarsity Press) by Denis D. Haack, a writer and lecturer with Ransom Fellowship in Rochester, Minn.

and God, and used language imaginatively (Gen. 2:20,23). Human work produced human culture in obedience to God. All of this was part of being human, and all of it was pleasing to God.

The work of our hands is not an interruption we must try to minimize to pursue more important endeavors. Work and human culture are not incidental to our faith, but foundational to our relationship with God. To tend livestock, program software; or raise a child is as honorable — and as spiritual — as witnessing or prayer.

Rejecting what is physical and despising it as unspiritual is a pagan idea. At Mount Sinai, God invited Israel's leaders to walk up the mountain to appear before Him. So they "went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against [them]; they saw God, and they ate and drank" (Exod. 24:9-11).

Seventy-four people find themselves before the face of Him who is a consuming fire, and what do they do? Eat and drink. Even in

the presence of God, that which is physical is not despised, but appreciated and accepted.

God is not displeased with the physical, but with sin. Because Christ is Lord of all, there is no dichotomy between physical and spiritual, secular and sacred. We must purge our minds and speech of notions such as "full-time service" and "secular careers." All Christians are to be fully devoted to their Savior. Whether our vocation is in missions or astronomy, our Lord is satisfied only with lives that reflect full-time service to Him.

Faithfulness means that our work, regardless of vocation, is to be rendered as obedient spiritual service to God.

The early Puritans correctly insisted that the Christian must see "his shop as well as his chapel as holy ground" and

How do we know what to say no to? It is by knowing what God has called us to say yes to.



that "every step and stroke in your trade is sanctified."

When I first met Dan, he was a staff member with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He spent his days on college campuses bringing the truth of God to students. Later, Dan left IVCF to work on a ranch in Wyoming. Now his time is filled with cattle, hay, and barbed-wire fences. Less spiritual than campus ministry? Not at all. Less pleasing to his heavenly Father? Nonsense. The apostle Paul even instructed slaves to fulfill their duties as unto the Lord (Eph. 6:5-8).

A friend in northern Minnesota is self-employed as an excavator. John has developed

expertise in digging cellars and septic tanks, grading roads, and moving earth and rock. Good solid work, but hardly on most lists of spiritual ministries. He occasionally has a chance to witness, and he consistently treats his customers and employees with honesty. These things are important, but his excavating doesn't need to be justified by evangelism. Employment that is not condemned by Scripture is acceptable as work. Those weeks when John is shut up for long hours alone in the cab of a truck are also service to God.

Faithfulness in our work means being obedient to God's specific calling for our lives.

God directs us in two ways. First, there is His *general calling*. This is His call to Christlikeness — to righteousness and obedience — which is applicable to every believer. Most of what we need to know about life and godliness comes in God's general call to us in His Word.

Then there is God's *specific calling*, which is particular to each Christian. His specific calling places our gifts and work within His sovereign purposes in history.

There's no need to become mystical at this point. Rarely in Scripture did God express His direction to His children through miraculous visitations. To think that a vision is finer than recognizing His sovereign hand in our circumstances is a failure of imagination. Our concern must be faithful obedience, not seeking after spiritual highs.

God's specific calling gives us direction as His stewards on the earth. His calling fits us. The one who calls us, made us (Jer. 1:5). And it is in this calling that we can use our creativity, gifts, and skills in obedient service.

Gaining a sense of God's specific calling is strategic.

First, it gives us direction in a world overflowing with need. Obedience is not the same as being manipulated by guilt over

every new cause. Christ's lordship, not need, is our priority. Even our Lord didn't heal every leper in Israel. He knew what He was sent to do, and He could leave the rest to His Father.

This does not mean we can be callous to the needs around us. Nevertheless, we should gear our lives not to the negative (needs), but to the positive (obedience to God's calling).

Second, God's specific calling gives us a basis on which to say no to the myriad good things that compete for our attention. How do we establish clear priorities for our lives? How do we know what to say no to? It is by knowing what God has called us to say yes to.

It can be disobedience to say yes to a good thing. A man can disobey by witnessing. Jesus told a leper He had healed to go to the priest as the Mosaic law commanded. Instead he started telling people what had happened, and Christ's ministry was hindered (Mark 1:38-45).

Third, knowing our calling also saves us from being manipulated by the latest fads. A sense of calling from God leads to a quiet assurance amid pressure to conform to the social ideal of the group we belong to.

God communicates His specific calling to Christians in several ways. Sometimes He speaks supernaturally, as He did to Paul when he was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9). This is rare, but apparently unmistakable.

For other people, God communicates His special calling by placing within them a passion for some life's work. It seems to be part of their being, as if they have been created for a single task, be it missions or science.

And for others, God seems to center their specific calling around a spiritual gift. How they make their living is a relatively minor thing to them. Everything is secondary to their developing and using their gift for the glory of God and the building up of the church.

But then there are some who sense no particular passion for any vocation and don't see their lives centered around their spiritual gifts. They may not even be sure God has directed them to their vocations. They simply got there.

If this fits you, it would be wise not to make a change without clear direction from the Lord. Being faithful includes trusting His sovereignty. His hand brought you here; you didn't get here by chance. Be faithful to what He has made clear to you regardless of how unclear other details remain.

Faithfulness is the essence of discipleship. If you find yourself working in a bakery, gaining a sense of God's specific calling won't necessarily mean you'll take up another line of work. It'll mean you faithfully bake bread as if your only customer were the Lord.

The proper motivation for faithfulness in work is pleasing God.

"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). Hard work doesn't necessarily result in success. It doesn't even guarantee we'll make a living. We are to work hard because we are servants of the King.

William Perkins put it this way: "What, must we not labor in our callings to maintain our families? I answer: this must be done: but this is not the scope and end of our lives. The true end of our lives is to do service to God in serving of man."

Even making money is a form of obedience. The Puritans understood that "if God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul, or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward."

Pleasing God means we will want our work to be marked

with excellence. How can we possibly settle for less when our labor is done as obedience to Christ? Just as we pray that our evangelism might bear fruit, so it is good to pray that the work of our hands would prosper to the Creator's glory.

Excellence includes working hard and conscientiously, giving the best we can. It means applying creativity in fulfilling our responsibilities. It means being the sort of employee who knows what it is to work for the King.

We must grant freedom to one another as we wrestle with what this means. Even those in the same profession can come to different conclusions before the Lord.

A doctor I know believes he is called to pour most of his time and energy into his local church. Though he works hard and with dedication as an emergency room physician, he is able to make a living by working only a few weekends each month. This doctor will probably never rise in the annals of the American Medical Association, but is this failure?

And the Christian physician who logs long days and nights at the hospital — and proportionately less time in church activities — is this different balance necessarily displeasing to God? Both physicians may be living lives of excellence before God.

Faithfulness means our vocation itself must be under the rule of Christ.

Scripture speaks not only to the personal morality of the scientist, but also to the nature of his science. The Word of God addresses not only the honesty and kindness of the teacher, but also the theories of learning, knowledge, and instruction. The lordship of Christ provides a foundation for understanding art and aesthetics even as it applies to the godliness of the musician.

No matter what our work involves, we must learn to ap-

proach it from the perspective of the Word of God. The Christian physician, for instance, must realize that bringing Christ's lordship to medicine involves far more than placing religious magazines in the waiting room. He must adopt a distinctly Christian basis for his ethics, business practices, relationships, and models of health, illness, and treatment.

At the Fall, sin bent everything out of shape. Every sphere of human labor carries mistaken assumptions and beliefs. We seldom discuss and examine them, yet this is exactly what we must do if we are to place our work under the rule of Christ. The enemy has infil-

Scripture speaks not only to the personal morality of the scientist, but also to the nature of science.



Beware of escapism, the temptation to use one part of our calling to escape other God-given responsibilities.



trated Creation, and now we can work to uncover his lies and replace them with truth (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

If a farmer sees the land as something he owns and can exploit, this will affect how he farms. But if he's deeply convinced the land is the Lord's, given to his care as a steward, he will make different choices.

The Fall didn't remove our work's significance, but it did twist work into something different from what God intended.

The Christian world view corresponds to what human beings have always understood about the nature of work. Work is a good thing and can be deeply satisfying, but it is also hard and

unrelenting. The Bible gives us reason to value work without idolizing it and at the same time understand why work is tormented with hardship. Without a knowledge of Creation and the Fall, it is impossible to reconcile these seemingly contradictory aspects of work.

Working in a fallen world means constantly leaning against the effects of the Fall. Just as we pull weeds in a garden, so we must labor to bring God's redemptive peace to every aspect of creation languishing under sin's curse, including the workplace.

Medicine and technology can free mankind from some of the painful aspects of the curse. Entrepreneurs can create new ventures, freeing families from the pain of unemployment. Artists can open our eyes to facets of truth we would otherwise miss. And missionaries can tell the Good News to people who have not yet heard. Every legitimate vocation and trade pursued as service to God is part of this redemptive task.

This is the Christian's call to arms. There is not one square inch of Creation over which Christ does not assert His absolute kingship. If that doesn't bring meaning to work, I can't imagine what would.

Faithfulness in work must be partially defined by the rest of what God has called us to do.

Though obedience in work is essential, the Creator doesn't see us as mere machines. Men and women, though made for work, are also made for much more. We have to set priorities and allocate our resources to the variety of responsibilities the Master has ordained for us. Destroying one's family to climb the corporate ladder is hardly Christian faithfulness.

Margie and I are convinced that if God has called me to travel in my work, then He has called our family to this as well. This means my travel need not

be a great burden, tearing away at the fabric of our relationships. Sure, this calls for sacrifice, and I have had to learn to schedule wisely. But because my calling embraces the family, dealing with my being away is also part of their calling before God. The one who called me made us a family.

I am a writer and lecturer by vocation. If I am to please God in my work, I must strive for standards of excellence appropriate to my trade. But I am also called to be a husband, a father, a citizen, and an elder in my church. Success in my work means I must be faithful to God in all He has called me to do.

This requires making difficult decisions. We need to resist the paralysis that can strike because we are faced with so many options. There is too much at stake in the spiritual warfare to be found running endlessly from one part of the battle to another, wondering where we should plunge in. Choose boldly by faith and work to His glory.

Beware of escapism, the temptation to use one part of our calling to escape other God-given responsibilities. I tend to find my vocation more satisfying than parenting, for example. Word processors and books don't talk back, even on bad days. Few of us find every task equally enjoyable, and if we're not careful, that can become an excuse for disobedience.

Faithfulness before God means we must be obedient across all of life. Seeking a proper balance in a fallen world is never easy, but it is part of the Christian's responsibility.

As William Tyndale said, "There is difference betwixt washing of dishes and preaching of the Word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all." It is in faithfulness to Him that we find His pleasure and our success. And it is in a biblical perspective on work that we find meaning and freedom in that part of life that consumes so much of our time and effort. ■