

A Work Ethic: The Golden Rule(s)

- I. After taking a break from my series on A Work Ethic, I'm returning to another installment of it. We'll begin with a review of the study up to this point and finish with a new section about the Golden Rules of work.
 - A. Does anyone remember what the Golden Rule says? "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This is one take on the Great commandment to love God supremely and love your neighbor as yourself.
 - B. But before we get into that part of the message, let's start with our review.
 - i. We started out the series by establishing the foundation for why **laziness is a sin**.
 - a) God, the Creator is a laborer and He sees work as a good and valuable attribute. This is the opposite of the way that a lazy person thinks.
 - After the creation of the earth, God says that He "rested from all His work" and the fourth commandment of The Ten confirms that it was passed on to man as a good thing.
 - 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,..."
 - b) God ordains specific work for us and commands us to pray for workers
 - Eph 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
 - Matt 9:37-38 - Then He *said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
 - ii. In the second message, we looked at how the purpose of work is all about displaying the glory and character of God.
 - a) We established that all three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are workers who have been working from the beginning and continue to work in the lives of believers and unbelievers now.
 - They were working together in the Creation and in establishing the nation – Israel – for themselves. They worked out many details in order to bring this about. (Captivity, Exodus, Establishment of kingdom, Exile, Return from Exile)
 - We saw through a short overview of some chapters in John that the Father is working and Jesus' work while He was on earth was a reflection of the work His Father wanted to be done. All of Jesus' miracles and tireless serving of people showed the works and working of God.
 - Finally, we saw that the Holy Spirit has a name, the Helper, that reflects a working nature. He is one called alongside to work in us and with us to

make us like Jesus, as well as to work in the world to convict men of their sin.

- In all of this, it became evident that all of God's works are characterized by faithfulness to His promises and covenants which ultimately show off His majesty and splendor!
 - In a practical sense, the main point was that we need to discover how we can become imitators of God as workers.
 - As described in John 14:12, we should recognize that we are to believe that the Holy Spirit will empower us to continue the works of Jesus in serving others with the love of God.
 - In so doing, we will bring glory to God by working with the same diligence, purposefulness and character that we see in Jesus.
 - We see this attitude in Him when He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."
- iii. In the most recent message on work, I transitioned to a discussion about vocation.
- a) The message began with a broad biblical view of how the concepts of having a calling or vocation or occupation are related.
 - The concept of vocation rests on the belief that life is about more than me. To speak of Vocation or Calling is to suggest that my life is a response to something beyond myself. That something is God.
 - We examined 1 Corinthians 7:17-24. The context is being content with whatever life circumstances God has placed you in, knowing that this is the specifically designed calling of God for your life.
 - vs. 17 It could be about your marriage and family status;
 - vs. 18-19 Racial and cultural identity, as well as social status are the calling of God
 - vs. 20 Remain in the calling/condition in which you were called
 - vss. 21-23: Even your job position or occupation – whether slave or laborer or manager or business owner
 - b) We looked at our forever Vocation in Christ as workers in His harvest field.
 - He was the ultimate servant of all and we should extend His reputation through our lives.
 - We are His workmanship doing the works which He prepared in advance for us to do in the church and in the world around us.
 - c) And we looked at how our Avocation – your passions and interests, which could be a hobby – fits into God's calling for us.
 - d) We concluded with a few words about how to make the most of our Vacations, so that we don't vacate our God-given responsibilities when we're not involved in our day-to-day vocation.
 - We still need to remember our purpose is to live like Christ in the world
 - We do that by using them for rejuvenation or short term missions.

- II. Now let's turn our attention to The Golden Rule(s) of our Work Ethic. Remember that the context is imitating God in the midst of the Vocation or Calling He has given us.
- A. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The context is the Sermon on the Mount – Midway through Jesus' public ministry and shortly after choosing the 12.
- i. **The overarching governance is** Mt 7:12 [In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.]
 - ii. This last phrase links it to the Greatest Commandment (Mt 22:37-40) has two components which make one whole. Mt 22:40 is the link between the two.
 - iii. Show that you love God by loving everyone you encounter on this earth as though you were encountering God in Christ
 - iv. The practical outworkings are amplified in Matthew 5:38-48 and Luke 6:27-36. The Jew in His audience would have been familiar with the OT laws related to the following.
 - a) 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I say to you, do not show opposition against an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other toward him also.
 - 40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak also.
 - 41 Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.
 - 42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.
 - **For clarification: The main point of all of these examples deals only with personal retaliation and surrender of personal rights, not criminal offenses or military aggression.**
 - **At your job or for school assignments or chores at home, go beyond what you are asked even if the request seems to be unreasonable. Don't just do the minimum required.**
 - b) 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same?
 - **This is God's "common grace" on all of mankind, as opposed to His special love for His people, His children, His bride – the Church.**
 - **The contrast between the world & the people of God should be noticeable.**
 - As Paul told Timothy, **"Let your progress (in godly conduct) be evident to everyone.."** **Dare to be different; to stick out from the crowd.**

- c) 48 Therefore you shall be perfect [complete], as your heavenly Father is perfect [complete and consistent towards all in love].
 - **This is an unattainable standard, set by the Perfect One Himself.**
 - **The Great Equalizer**
 - **But the miracle of the gospel through the Great Exchange stated in 1 Cor 5:21 that “[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**
 - **This miracle means that He can now ask us to “be imitators of God”, showing ourselves to be like Him & of Him.**
 - d) Love impartially, especially the “unlovely”, meaning those difficult for you to love. Be the one to take initiative with those who are branded as outcasts. [My example from Elementary School – Richard]
- B. SubRule #1** - “Do your work heartily unto the Lord...” Col 3:23-24 **is the heart of the passage!**
- i. How would you perform your work as a parent, son or daughter, husband or wife, student or laborer, manager or business owner **if you knew that Jesus was watching you?**
 - a) **Remember that He is!**... Heb 4:13-16 “All things are open and laid bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” To guide us with His judgment and to draw us near with His mercy.
 - b) In view of this always do your work with excellence (**to the best of your ability**), diligence (**giving focused, 100% effort**) and completeness (**everything that you are asked to do with nothing left undone**).
 - ii. Remember that He is a rewarder – store up imperishable treasure in heaven.
- C. SubRule #2** - “Slaves honor masters through obedience Col 3:22, 25
- i. From a positive perspective, obeying by doing right to not disgrace Christ, not just to please others.
 - ii. Does it bring honor to your employer to act dishonestly; even if they ask you to?
 - iii. vs. 25 says, If you do wrong, you will suffer the consequences of it.
- D. SubRule #3** - and vice-versa... “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.” Col 4:1
- i. Paul was probably on both ends of the spectrum at some point in time
 - a) e.g. As an apprentice tent maker
 - b) As a tent maker – independent businessman
 - ii. Business owners and Managers must be filled with the Spirit when dealing with employees
 - a) Never ask someone to do something in anger or retaliation or threatening
 - b) Be prayerful and think first, not impulsive.
- E. SubRule #4** - “He who is faithful in a little thing...” Lk 16:10-13
- i. Be diligent with every task; look at it as a step towards the next level of trust.
 - ii. Give me an undivided heart (Ps 86:11) You cannot serve God and mammon.
 - iii. As we began, so we end; all of your work is about displaying your love for God!

III. The Conclusion; The Bow on the Package; The Icing on the Cake

A. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.**" 1

Cor 10:31

i. The Westminster Confession says that, "The chief end of man is to love God and enjoy Him forever."

ii. This is what governs every attitude and action that we display as **worker-representatives (ambassadors)** of Christ in everything that we do.

iii. It pleases our Father God; it makes Him happy and proud to call us His own.

iv. And it brings us the joy of having peace and contentment in our hearts; being confident that we are pleasing to Him, like obedient children with parents.

B. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His **workmanship [His skillfully crafted ones]**, created in Christ Jesus for **good works [not sinful, evil, vengeful, selfish deeds or words towards other]**,... which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.