

Message: A Spirit-Filled Work Ethic - Serving in the Fear of Christ

Text: Ephesians 5:18-21; 6:5-9

Introduction

- A. We are all tasked with working, whether in the home, in school, out of the home. How many of us have to return to our normal work routine tomorrow/this week? How many of us are looking forward to our weekends/vacations being over?
- B. Not all work is pleasant to return to. I've had more than one job in my life where I went to work with a sense of dread, or even a knot in my stomach due to the stress and even hostility in the workplace.
- C. So does this indicate that work, in and of itself a bad thing, that work in and of itself is punishment, a result of the curse God put on creation due to the sin of our forefather, Adam?

- 1. The Scriptures teach us that work, in and of itself, was created by God, not as a curse, but as something good, as a privilege, reflecting the image of God Who is working and Who is righteous in all His works.

Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue it**; and **rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ...³¹ God saw **all that He had made**, and behold, it **was very good**.

John 5:17 But He answered them, "**My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.**"

- 2. Notice that in pre-fall creation, before Adam fell into sin, God gave him work to do in the garden of Eden. So work in and of itself is not a punishment, but a privilege from God. All of our life and work was to orbit around God and His purposes, and in this way we, His servants, were to honor Him.

Genesis 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden **to cultivate it and keep it**.

- D. But Eve was deceived by Satan into no longer fearing the Lord (Gen. 3:4 "You will not die."), and her and Adam's work of harvesting fruit left its orbit around the Lord to orbit around self-interest and self-exaltation (Gen. 3:5 "You will be like God.") And so as God had warned, our sin brought upon us and the creation God's curse, making our work hard, oppressive. Life will now be difficult and will end in death. The curse upon sin and the presence of sin in the workplace often makes our work environment stressful, hurtful, wearisome, unpleasant, boring, oppressive, intimidating, drama filled.

Genesis 3:1 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; **Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.**¹⁸ **"Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;** And you will eat the plants of the field;¹⁹ **By the sweat of your face You will eat bread**, till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

- E. Can you imagine if every work environment were filled with the Spirit and personality of Jesus, and there was no more curse? Some day when Jesus returns it will be so.

Revelation 22:3 **There will no longer be any curse;** and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and **His bond-servants will serve Him;**

- F. But the transformation of the world and workplace has already begun to take place in the transformation of those for whom Christ died, those who have been born again by the Spirit of God to a sincere faith in God's Son, Christ Jesus. Though all of us were born in sin, and therefore none of our work orbited

around the Lord and His purposes, Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from all self-promoting, godless, lawless work and purify for Himself a people who zealously work for Him what is good.

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, **Christ Jesus,** ¹⁴ **who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed,** and **to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.**

G. The indwelling Spirit of Christ applies the death of Christ to our sinful work attitudes and habits, replacing them with the attitudes and habits of Christ's Spirit. Which is why the commands we will now look at in Ephesians 6:5-9 are linked back to the command of 5:18-21 ...

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit,** ... ²¹ **being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.** ²² Wives, (*be subject*) to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

H. The Spirit transforms the manner and motives by which Christians relate to others in the interpersonal transactions of daily living, as husbands and wives, children and parents, in Paul's context, slaves and masters, which in principle relates in our context to employees and employers.

I. Ephesians 6:5-8 DUTIES OF SERVANTS (Employees)

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ **not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.** ⁷ **With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,**

A. 6:5 Obey masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling - before the Lord

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, **be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling,** in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

Colossians 3:22 Slaves, **in all things obey those who are your masters on earth,** not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, **fearing the Lord.**

1 Peter 2:18 **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect** (*phobos = fear*), not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

Titus 2:9 *Urge* **bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything,** to be well-pleasing, **not argumentative,**

B. 6:5,6 In sincerity of heart - not with eye service, as men pleasers

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, **in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;** ⁶ **not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers,** but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Colossians 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, **not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart,** fearing the Lord.

C. 6:5,6,7 As to Christ as His servants - as to your Master in heaven

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, **as to Christ;** ⁶ **not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ,** doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ **With good will render service, as to the Lord,** and not to men,

D. 6:6 Doing the will of God from the heart as Christ's slaves

Ephesians 6:6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart.**

E. 6:7 Serving with good will, not pilfering - we are blessed in order to be a blessing

Ephesians 6:7 **With good will render service,** as to the Lord, and not to men,

Titus 2:9 *Urge* bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ **not pilfering, but showing all good faith** so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

II. Ephesians 6:9 DUTIES OF MASTERS (Employers)

A. Be subject to one another - masters to servants.

Ephesians 5:18 ... **be filled with the Spirit,** ... ²¹ **being subject to one another** in the fear of Christ.

1. It is understandable to ask, "How are those in authority - husband, parents, bosses - to subject themselves to those under their authority?" The answer is, we are given authority to serve those under our authority, fulfilling our God-appointed roles according to the leading of the Spirit, as unto the Lord.
2. As John Calvin said, "Even kings and governors rule that they may serve." Invested with apostolic authority, Paul writes ...

1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all *men*, **I have made myself a slave to all,** so that I may win more.

3. Jesus humbled himself as a servant, and though we rightly call Him Lord, He served us as Lord.

Mark 10 **whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all,** ⁴⁵ "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

B. Treat your servants in the same way as servants are asked to treat you - with sincerity, good will (so don't threaten), helpfulness, honesty (not cheating them of wages/benefits), with equal status as human beings before the Lord.

Ephesians 6:9 **And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening,** knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

William Hendriksen (p. 265): "Promote the welfare of your slaves as you expect them to promote yours. Show the same interest in them and their affairs as you hope they will show in you and your affairs."

III. MOTIVATION FOR BOTH (employees and employers)

A. 5:21 in fear of Christ our Master, who is coming to judge the world impartially in righteousness.

Ephesians 5:21 **being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.**

Psalms 112:1 How blessed is the man **who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in His commandments.**

1. In the fear of Christ's judgment upon the faithless and disobedient.

Ephesians 6:9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, **knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.**

Colossians 3:25 For **he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.**

2. 6:8 In the hope of Christ's reward in the presence of His glory in His eternal kingdom.

Ephesians 6:8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

- B. Loving to glorify Christ, show His beauty, as does the Spirit who fills us.

Titus 2:9 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith **so that they will adorn (kosmeo) the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.**

Conclusion:

- A. The goodness and honor of working for Christ

1. Social status On earth (“in the flesh”) does not affect our status before the Lord. There truly is no partiality with God. The measure of a man or woman, child or adult, one in authority or one under authority is how we measure up to “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”

Ephesians 4:13 **until we all attain to** the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to **the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**

2. Therefore, there is honor and dignity in every job in which Christ can be imitated and served with sincerity. For all such work, there is Christ's eternal reward, no matter how large or small are our paychecks on earth.

- B. If Christ doesn't return today, then we'll have to return to work tomorrow.

1. Yes we work in a sin affected, sin cursed world which often makes our work stressful, wearisome, unpleasant, unfair, and at time less than fruitful.
2. But all of this will change when Christ comes and creates a new heavens and earth.

Revelation 22:1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds* of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.³ **There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;**⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

3. This is why God's Word calls Christ's second coming our “blessed hope” when all life and all labor will be transformed into conformity to Christ.

Titus 2:13 **looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,**¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

- C. But because Christ first came to give Himself for us, this transformation is already happening in the life and labor of His people. So be filled with His Spirit, so as to live each day and work each day in that hope.