

A Biblical Perspective on Work

Gen 2:15

Introduction:

1. The first Labor Day parade was held in New York City on Sept 5, 1882.
 - a. 20,000 workers marched up Broadway carrying banners that read –
“Labor creates all wealth”
“Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest eight hours for recreation”
 - b. After the parade was over, picnics were held all over the city as workers ate Irish stew, homemade bread and apple pie
 - c. When evening came fireworks were set off
 - d. Over the next few years this celebration spread across the nation and there were celebrations in every state.
 - e. In 1894 Congress voted to make Labor Day a federal holiday
 - f. It was a day set aside to celebrate the value and dignity of work
2. Today Labor Day is the unofficial end of summer
3. It is the last holiday before Thanksgiving and Christmas and the last chance to get one extra day of vacation before the kids get back in school
4. “Labor” is mentioned 24x in the NT and “work” is mentioned 101x
 - a. For some “work” is a dirty word
 - b. “Don’t work too hard” we often hear people say
5. Work is a blessing
 - a. People in hospitals wish for the day when they can work again
 - b. Disabled people wish they could once again work
 - c. Many people retire and then die because they don’t feel useful

I. Labor is Honorable

A. It is Part of God’s Plan for Man

1. Adam and Eve were to work – Gen 2:15

15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

 - a) *Adam and Eve were to work before the fall of man*
 - b) *Work is not a curse from sin*
 - c) *God provided a beautiful place for Adam and Eve to live, but they were to take care of it*
 - d) *It is easy to picture Adam and Eve working in the garden pruning and trimming*
 - e) *Here is the first employment in the Bible*

2. Work was affected by the fall of man – Gen 3:17-19

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; **18** Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; **19** In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

 - a) *After Adam and Eve sinned the ground was cursed*
 - b) *Work became more difficult*
 - c) *We have to fight against the environment*
3. The duty of labor – Ex 20:8-9

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9** Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

 - a) *Cain and Abel were workers*
 - b) *Noah built the ark for 120 yrs*
 - c) *David was a shepherd*
 - d) *Matthew was a tax collector*
 - e) *Some of the disciples were fishermen*
 - f) *Luke was a medical doctor*
 - g) *Paul was a tentmaker*

B. We are Designed to Work

1. Our bodies are ideally designed for work
 - a) *Hands*
 - b) *Feet*
 - c) *Back*
 - d) *Mind to calculate and figure*
2. Through work we get the things we need – Prov 14:23a

23 In all labour there is profit...

 - a) *Work is rewarded*
3. Do your best at work – Ecc 9:10a

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might...

 - a) *Once a plane crashed sending many to their deaths. Upon investigation it was learned that some nuts were not tightened on their bolts. A little negligence and carelessness caused a terrible crash*
4. Do your work as to the Lord
 - a) *An executive secretary once said, "When I began to envision Jesus standing behind my boss, my work changed. I had to do my very best. Even the menial task of serving coffee became a joy and my attitude changed from arrogance to respect.*

II. Jesus is Our Example in Labor

A. Jesus was Always Mindful of His Labor

1. He seeking and saving the lost – Jn 4:34
34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.
 - a) *He preached, taught, healed*
 - b) *Jesus reached Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, Samaritan woman*
 - c) *Jesus came to complete the work that the Father gave Him*
 - d) *He came to die for the sheep*
2. Jesus was imitating the heavenly Father - Jn 5:17
17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.
 - a) *God never rests from His governmental work*
 - b) *He never quits His providential work*
 - c) *On the Sabbath, the sun rises and sets, the wind blows, the rain comes, the tides come and go*
 - d) *God never rests from upholding and sustaining the whole realm of creation*
3. Jesus saw the urgency of His work – Jn 9:4
4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
 - a) *The Savior saw the urgency of His Work*
 - b) *There would be a time when work was over*

B. Jesus was a Hard Worker

1. Jesus worked overtime – Mk 1:31-32
32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.
 - a) *Jesus had been busy all day long*
 - b) *In the evening, when the Sabbath was over, the people brought to Jesus their sick for healing*
 - c) *He did not send them away, Jesus did not ignore them*
2. Jesus worked so much that He couldn't eat lunch – Mk 3:20
20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.
 - a) *Their time and attention was so occupied that Jesus and the disciples were obliged to forego their regular meals*
 - b) *Jesus had been up all night praying and He had been busy that morning in calling and appointing His apostles*
3. Jesus was exhausted – Mk 4:37-38
38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we...
 - a) *Jesus was exhausted from work*
 - b) *Preaching, healing, helping, feeding*

C. Jesus Finished His Work – Jn 17:4

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

1. Few things in life are so satisfying
2. Paul knew the feeling – 2Tim 4:6-8

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. **7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: **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.

III. Our Labor for the Lord

A. We are Saved to Work

1. Take my yoke upon you” – Matt 11:28-30
28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. **30** For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.
2. Walk in good works – Eph 2:10
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
3. Paul commends the Thessalonians - 1Thess 1:3
3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

B. Our Labor Will be Rewarded

1. Our labor is not in vain – 1Cor 15:58
58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

In the days of the stagecoach, a man undertook a journey. He was informed that there were first, second and third-class passengers. The seats all looked alike to him so he purchased a third-class ticket. All went well for a time and the man was congratulating himself on saving some money. Presently the stagecoach came to the foot of a very steep hill, when the driver stopped the horses and shouted, “First class passengers remain seated, second-class passengers get out and walk and third-class passengers get out, go to the back and push.” What churches need today is third-class passengers. Plenty want to sit and look on while others do the work but it is the third-class passengers who are willing to bear “the burden and heat of the day.”

2. God won't forget our labor – Heb 6:10

10 For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

During World War II England needed to increase their production of coal. Winston Churchill called together labor leaders and workers. In his speech, Churchill pictured a huge parade of celebration after the war was won. In the parade would be sailors who kept the vital sea lanes open. In the procession Churchill could see the soldiers who had defeated the enemy, then came the pilots who had driven the Luftwaffe from the British skies. Churchill continued, "Last of all could come a long line of sweat-stained, soot-streaked men in miner's caps. Someone would cry from the crowd, "Where were you during the critical days of our struggle?" And from ten thousand throats would come the answer, "We were deep in the earth with our faces to the coal." Not all the jobs in a church are prominent and glamorous. It is often those people with their "faces to the coal" who help our church accomplish its mission.

3. "I know thy works" – Rev 2:2

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

4. Our works will be judged – 1Cor 3:12-15

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; **13** Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. **14** If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. **15** If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

a) *Universal* b) *Individual* c) *Impartial* d) *Final*

IV. Someday There Will Be Rest

A. After Working, We Enjoy the Rest

B. Believers Can Look Forward to the Rest

1. "I will give you rest" – Matt 11:28-30

2. "rest from their labors" – Rev 14:13

C. It Will Be Perfect Rest

1. Some rest here on earth is not perfect rest

2. Can't sleep at night

3. Take a nap and the phone rings

D. It Will Be Permanent Rest

Hillcrest Baptist Church #108 – Labor Day 2010

FINISHING WORK ON EARTH

Recently I glimpsed the glory of finishing a task well. At Arlington National Cemetery, I saw the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns. I had watched that ceremony several times before, always moved by its solemnity and precision.

This time, however, I witnessed something new. When the changing of the guard was completed, the commanding officer asked us to remain standing in silence. Sergeant Jennings had completed 27 months of this special duty and wanted now to pay his respect to the unknown soldiers. A guard escorted Jennings' family to a place of honor.

The commanding officer handed Jennings four roses. Jennings approached the great Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from the First World War, knelt, and placed a rose before it. Then he moved with solemn dignity to the tombs honoring unknown soldiers from the Second World War, and the wars in Korea and Vietnam, kneeling to place one red rose upon each. He returned to his commanding officer and stood before him. At attention, with their eyes locked, they shook hands. Then Sergeant Jennings carefully removed his white gloves and returned them, his work finished. He saluted his officer, greeted his family, and left.

With tears running down my face, I thought of standing before my Lord Jesus someday, taking off my gloves and handing them to him.