

VOCATION: The Art of Work

The Art of Persevering

Genesis 3:17-19

*“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” **Genesis 2:15***

Work is Part of God’s Good Plan, not just...

- **A Necessary Evil**
- **A Result of Sin in the World**
- **Contrary to God’s Plan for Our Lives**
- **A Means to the End of My Personal Provision and Happiness**

If work is a part of God’s good plan, why is it so difficult?

*“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...so when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” **Genesis 2:16-17a, 3:6***

*“Work exists now in a world sustained by God but disordered by sin. Only if we have some understanding of how sin distorts work can we hope to counteract its effects and salvage some of the satisfaction God planned for our work.” **Timothy Keller (Every Good Endeavor)***

*“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. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” **Genesis 3:17-19***

Main Idea: The Art of Work Requires Perseverance Due to Sin’s Power Over It

Three Areas of Cultivation in Which We Must Persevere

I. Cultivate a Heart for God

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” **Proverbs 3:5-6***

Cultivate: to till, to care for, to tend

“‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.’”

Matthew 22:36-38

Work has been made difficult by sin; therefore, it is imperative that we cultivate a heart for God first and foremost in our vocation.

II. Cultivate Where God Allows Despite Difficulties

Biblical Illustrations of Difficulties at Work:

- **Exploitative Practices** – Slavery (Exodus) & Exile (Jeremiah)
- **Poor Wages** – James 4
- **Unjust Treatment** – Joseph, Potiphar’s wife, imprisonment, etc.
- **Wicked People Prospering** – Psalm 37
- **Harassment on the Job** – Nehemiah 4

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

Jeremiah 29:7

“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14a, 16b

III. Cultivate Until God is Finished with You

*“So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot.” **Ecclesiastes 3:22a***

God is not finished with you here when you retire.

Two Extremes on Vocation:

- **Idealism:** My work will absolutely result in radical, lasting, positive change in the world around me.
- **Cynicism:** Nothing changes. Don’t care too much, don’t work too hard, just do what it takes to make a living.

*“Work will be both frustrating and fulfilling, and sometimes – just often enough – human work gives us a glimpse of the beauty and genius that might have been the routine characteristic of all our work, and what, by the grace of God it will be again in the new heavens and the new earth.” **Timothy Keller***

Perseverance is best seen, not in our work, but in God’s grace.

*“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:8***

Salvation is available because of God’s Perseverance in Christ!

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities:

- *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* – Elwell & Comfort (2001)
- *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* – Hughes & Laney (2001)
- *New Bible Commentary* – D.A. Carson, R.T. France (1994)
- *Critical & Explanatory* – Jamieson, Fausset & Brown (1997)
- *Bible Knowledge Commentary* – J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zook (1985)
- *Faithlife Study Bible* – J.D. Barry (2012)
- *CSB Study Bible* – Editor Trevin Wax (2017)
- *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* – Richard J. Erickson (1995)
- *Every Good Endeavor* – Timothy Keller (2012)

