

1 Corinthians 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

CREATION

In a perfect world, the world which God created, man was created to work. Work in and of itself is not a result of the curse, but in fact part of the very plan of God for man.

Genesis 1:26-31 ²⁶ ¶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And **let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**" ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**" ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, **it was very good.** And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

We were created in the image of God. Man's ability and opportunity to work is part of that image of God in man. God "worked" He continues to "work" and therefore as we work we reflect in some way the image of God.

Exodus 20:11 ¹¹ For in six days the LORD **made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,** and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Colossians 1:15-17 ¹⁵ ¶ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

FALL

When sin entered the world our work was directly affected. We now live in and work in a sin cursed world.

Genesis 3:17-19 ¹⁷ 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; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ 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."

However, having created man in His own image, God has made man a creative being.

Genesis 4:17-22 ¹⁷ ¶ Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When **he built a city**, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. ¹⁹ And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. ²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of **those who dwell in tents and have livestock**. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all **those who play the lyre and pipe**. ²² Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was **the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron**. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

REDEMPTION

Because of what Christ has done for us we can now go about our work more clearly imaging God as we labour not as unto men but as unto the Lord.

Ephesians 6:5-9 ⁵ ¶ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. ⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Colossians 3:22-24 ²² Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

We recognize that without Christ we can do nothing!

John 15:5 ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Philippians 4:13 ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

James 4:13-16 ¹³ ¶ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"-- ¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

How Should We Then Work?

1. With Excellence

- Yes, but not primarily as we will be tempted to pursue excellence at the price of ethics or without consideration for whom we hurt.

2. Ethical

- Yes, but not primarily as we will be tempted to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think just because we are more ethical than the next guy.

3. Evangelistic

- Yes, but often this can come with a narrow view of the Gospel in that the Gospel is just for witnessing rather than life transformation. We will be tempted to sacrifice our work ethic, become slack at our tasks and justify ourselves because we are using our time to “share the Gospel.”

We need to think of our work theologically. Our work is all of that and much more.

“How shall we then work? Consider the essence of your work and try to connect it to the nature and character of God. Consider what discipline drives or sustains your line of work — Science, Math, Language, Arts, etc. and trace it to the triune Creator. Attempt to integrate the discipline that drives your occupation with the attribute(s) of God reflected in your vocation. In doing this theological integration, work can become worship.” (Jonathan Dodson, Boundless.com)

There is still more...

“Work-as-excellence can lead to competition-driven, Christ-belittling work. Ethical work can easily devolve into moralistic work in which we secretly congratulate ourselves for squeaky clean employment, regardless of the quality of our output. An evangelistic approach to work can be awfully narrow, neglecting our important role in contributing to the whole of society. And work as vocational essence — the attempt to theologically integrate the nature of our work with the nature of God — can lead to intellectualism...” (Jonathan Dodson, Boundless.com)

How shall we then work?

We must work *from* our acceptance in Christ, not *for* our acceptance in Christ. Instead of seeking the acceptance and applause of our co-workers or competition by sinfully striving for excellence, we can rest in God's acceptance and approval, working excellently to honor him ([Col 3:22](#); [1 Cor. 15:50-58](#)). Do excellent work, not to earn God's favor but as a faith effort, as an act of worship.

No matter how tight our work ethic, we will inevitably fail. Instead of taking comfort in our superior work ethic, Christ calls us to rest in his finished work on our behalf ([Eph. 2:8-9](#); [Heb. 9:23-28](#)). It is by grace that we are saved, and it is by grace that we are sanctified. Our

ethics are not the basis of acceptance before God; they are an expression of our new nature and love for our Creator.

Instead of trying to win God's favor with evangelistic work or neglecting the whole gospel, we can work with the whole gospel in view, which recreates souls and societies ([Isa. 61](#) cf. [Luk. 4:18-19](#); [Ezek. 36:8-10, 26-32](#); [Rev 21-22](#)).

Instead of leaning upon our theological savvy or reasoning skills, God calls us to rest in the foolishness of the cross for our identity. Our work should be a love offering characterized by excellence, ethics, evangelism and theological integration, but not as a basis for finding our worth before God or our acceptance from others. We work not for God to accept us, but are accepted because of God's work in and for us ([Phil. 2:12-13](#)). *This* is how we should then work.

Philippians 2:12-13 ¹² ¶ Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

This is so liberating. The Gospel frees me to see my work, my calling as an opportunity to glorify God by more accurately imaging Him in my life which I am able to do because of what Christ has done with me.

It also tells me that every biblically appropriate task is Gospel work. There are no "higher" callings. There is a higher accountability for those who teach the Word, but the standard of Christ-likeness and imaging our Creator in all we do is the same for every believer.

Whether you are a plumber, farmer, accountant, builder, small business owner, preacher, teacher, retired, printer, student, draftsman, joiner, it doesn't matter.

You are created in the image of God, redeemed by the blood of His precious Son, freed from the controlling power of sin (which makes work a necessary evil until I can retire) to live for Christ by the power of Christ in all of your work for the glory and praise of God!