

The Blessing of Work

by J.R. Miller

Work is a blessing and a means of growth, development, and happiness, and it is essential for a good Christian life.

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Ecclesiastes 3:22, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "The Blessing of Work", "Purpose in Labor"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that work is not a curse resulting from sin, but rather a blessing that was part of God's original design for humanity in the Garden of Eden. He argues that while the fall of man altered the nature of work, it remains essential for personal growth, moral education, and contributing to society. Miller highlights that idleness leads to negative consequences, while diligent work fosters character and happiness. He encourages individuals to embrace their callings with enthusiasm, as work is a means through which God blesses and develops us. Ultimately, Miller asserts that through work, we find purpose, joy, and a deeper connection to God.

Transcript

Some people have the impression that work is part of the curse which sin brought into the world. They imagine that if our first parents had not fallen into sin, that they would never have had anything to do, that they would have walked about forever among the trees of Paradise and by the rivers, having a good time. They suppose that they were doomed to work as part of the penalty of their sin.

But this is a mistaken impression, which a careful reading of the story of Eden and the fall will quickly remove. We learn here that after the creation that, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." That is, work was part of the unfallen life in Paradise. It was never meant that man should have nothing to do. Idleness was not part of the Edenic happiness.

No doubt the fall changed the character of work. Man was turned out of the garden; and these words were spoken to him, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

We may infer that before the fall, work was congenial and pleasant, without burden or care; and that after sin had left its blight on the earth -- work became toil, with vexing and sorrow, with thorns and thistles. Yet

we must never forget that work was part of man's lot, even in Paradise. Therefore work itself is not a curse -- but a blessing. All of life testifies to this. Everywhere we find work to be one of the conditions of good and happiness. God himself is active. "My Father works hitherto, and I work," said the Master. God is never idle. The Decalogue enjoins work as a divine ordinance. "Six days shall you labor."

Jesus sanctified labor, by working with his own hands as a carpenter. Paul wrought at a common trade, while engaged in doing some of the most wonderful missionary work the world has ever known. He was never ashamed of being a workingman -- but gloried in the fact that his own hands had ministered to his necessities. He also spoke strongly in commendation of work, and of the reproach of idleness. "If any will not work -- neither let him eat!" Then he added that he had heard of some that lived among the Christians disorderly, that worked not at all -- but were busybodies. That is, being idle, with nothing to do -- they busied themselves in other people's affairs, not helping them -- but meddling and gossiping! This is one of the surest fruits of idleness. These people the apostle commanded and exhorted that they should work quietly, and eat their own bread -- bread earned with their own hands.

Henry Drummond said: "The ideal perfect and divine life was not spent with a book -- but with a hammer and a saw. There is nothing greater in the world, than the simple doing of every-day tasks. Work is our moral education; no work -- no opportunities. The farm is not a place only for the growing of stock; the shop is not the place for the growing of machines alone. They are the places for the growing of souls."

Work is one of the best means of grace. Whatever helps in one's growth and development of life and character, is a means of grace. Without work, one never can grow. Idleness breeds disease -- it is always unwholesome. No matter how much money one may have, though it is unnecessary for him to earn anything -- yet for the sake of the saving of his own life and for his mere physical well-being, he ought to do his share in the world's work.

We have no right to our daily bread, until we have earned it. We must work, too, for the sake of others. Not to do anything is to be a parasite, giving nothing to the world, which gives us so many blessings.

One cannot be a good Christian and be idle -- unless one is really physically disqualified for labor of every kind. In such a case the blessing comes upon the willing heart, though the hands must be folded. Prayer without work, is but one wing to the soul, which can only flutter along the ground and cannot fly. There are times when even holy devotions must be given up for holier duty of work.

Among the legends of the past, it is written: "Although Francesca was unwearied in her devotions -- yet if during her prayers she was called away by her husband or any domestic duty, she would close the book cheerfully, saying that a wife and mother when called upon, must leave her God at the altar -- to find him in her domestic affairs." This is very suggestive. There are times when to stay on one's knees at prayer would be sin -- God calls to some imperative service, and his call must be obeyed.

When we pray that grace may abound in us, and that we may become more and more like Christ -- the blessing will not likely come in frames of mind, in devout feelings, in exalted spiritual states -- but in new calls to duty, to service, to work. It is in our work, that God comes nearest to us, and that Christ enters most deeply into our experiences, and brings to us the sweetest joy.

The kind of work we should do depends upon what we are divinely fitted to do. It may be on a farm, or in a shop, or in a store. It may be in common household tasks. It may be in some intellectual pursuit, or in direct service for Christ. Every one should have a calling, and should devote himself to it with enthusiasm.

A large part of the blessing, is in the work itself. Even if the thing we do is not valuable, or seems to yield no result -- there is still a blessing in merely being busy. If one has to work without pay -- it is better than to be idle. If one has nothing to do -- it is better to find some task, than to sit with folded hands in unwholesome idleness.

The lesson is for the young people, because it is in youth that we must learn to work, if ever we do. Work is health. Work is life. Work is the way to strength and power. Work builds up the character, and knits the thews of manliness. Work carries in itself, one of the prime secrets of happiness. Idleness is never truly happy; but he who labors with all his might, has a good conscience, and sleeps sweetly. Work is one of God's best ways of giving comfort. "Had it not been for my work," said one after a great sorrow, "I would never have rallied; my hard work saved me."

These are suggestions of the blessings of work. The young people are fortunate, who by the conditions of their early life, are required to engage in regular, uninterrupted, and even severe labor. Thus they are not only trained to self-dependence -- but their abilities are developed, their character is formed into strength; they are prepared for happy, wholesome, useful living, and their lives thus become blessings in the world.

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