Bible Study: Is Work a Necessary Evil?

More than one Christian has pictured heaven as a place where the saved will lie about all day, perhaps strumming a harp while sitting on a cloud. Many, at least, see heaven as one big permanent vacation. But could we really be happy with nothing to do - forever? Does the Bible portray work as a necessary evil which is a result of sin entering the world?

Read Genesis 1:28 and 2:15 and verse 18. Was there any sin in the world at the time related in these verses? Do we have a name for the task God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:15? What is it? Is this work? What can we conclude, then, about the idea that work is a result of sin?

Now read Genesis 3:17-19. Why is God speaking these words to Adam? Is God saying here that because he sinned, man will now have to work? What is He saying?

Many passages like Proverbs 10:4 extol the virtues of work. But is it possible that our negative view of work arises from the modern interpretation of the so-called "Protestant work ethic" which neglects wife, children, and even personal health for the "higher good" of the material rewards of work? Compare this attitude with Psalm 127. How does Psalm 127 offer balance to the life which is lived almost totally at work?

What is to be the focus and reason for our work? Ourselves? Our family? The material results? Take a look at the example of Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 31:20-21. How does this answer the question? How are we to think of all that we do? Do we have a better motivation than seeing all that we do, at home and at work, as a thanks offering to God? But, there is yet another reward of work. What is this reward, as mentioned in Ecclesiastes 5:12?

So we have seen that work is not a result of sin. However, sin has added a new dimension to work - frustration and degeneration. And though Christ has come to do away with the consequences of sin, many of the material consequences of sin are seen in our lives. Yet, take a look at 2 Corinthians 5:17. How does this relate the original, perfect creation to what we have in Christ since sin has become part of the creation? What attitudes are encouraged here which help us to see our work positively? Would this attitude help you enjoy your work more?

In closing this study on work, prayerfully read the entire fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians, relating the truths offered here to the way you operate on the job.

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