



Work and Prosperity

(Deut. 28:11-13)

Obedience always brings blessings. Deuteronomy 28:13 says: *The Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you will only move upward and never downward if you listen to the Lord your God's commands I am giving you today and are careful to follow them* (HCSB). The Israelites were told that if they were careful to obey God, then this would happen: *The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow* (v. 12, ESV). The economy of Israel was agricultural, and rain was essential to producing a bountiful harvest. Rain was under the control of God alone. But the Israelites also had to work on the land with their hands, which was why God also said He would bless all the work of their hands.

Work is essential to prosperity.

Even if the Lord would send rain at the proper time, if the Israelites did not work by plowing their fields and sowing seeds, then there would be no harvest. (Conversely, no matter how hard the Israelites would work, if the Lord's hand of blessing was NOT upon them, say if He allowed drought or locusts, then their labor would be in vain.)

God Himself is a worker. The first time He appears in the Bible, He is working to create the heavens and the earth from nothing (Genesis 1:1-25). God created you and me to be like Him — a worker. In Gen. 1:28, He commanded Adam and Eve to subdue the earth and have dominion over all that He created. Subduing and having dominion are work. God ordained work for us even before the fall. Notice that sin had not yet entered the world when *the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it* (Gen. 2:15, ESV). The idea that work is a result of the curse is not biblical.

The Hebrew word for work, *melachah*, is the same one used to refer: to our labor that we should perform for six days but cease on the seventh day as a Sabbath to the Lord (Exodus 20:9-10); to the building of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 5:16); and to Aaron and his sons who *made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense for all the work of the Most Holy Place* (1 Chronicles 6:49a, ESV). This tells us that work rendered in the marketplace is no less sacred than work rendered in the church. For students, work entails reading, analyzing, memorizing, writing, etc. No matter what work we do, if we are diligent, if we work hard while submitting our minds and hearts to Jesus, then we will go a long way towards enjoying a prosperous life.

Laziness is a hindrance to prosperity.

Laziness is disobedience. It goes against God's design for us to be workers like Him. In Proverbs 6, Solomon directs the attention of a lazy person to the example of the ant, a lowly insect: *Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. How long will you stay in bed, you slacker? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, and your poverty will come like a robber, your need, like a bandit* (vv. 6-11, HCSB). Do not simply sit idly, hoping that something good will happen to you. *The slacker does not plow during planting season; at harvest time he looks, and there is nothing* (Prov. 20:4, HCSB).

What is your attitude towards work? You might be willing to work but not "too much". Or you might just be going through the motions when you work. But we are called to work with all our hearts, as for the Lord. People can be drawn to Christ by seeing the attitude of a Christian in the workplace — working hard, working joyfully, and not taking shortcuts. Aside from the workplace, we are called to work with all our hearts at home. We don't get paid when we throw the garbage or clean the toilet, but these things are work. Colossians 3:23-24 says: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving* (NIV).

Work and Prosperity (cont'd)

God gave us bodies designed for movement and minds designed for creativity. Notice that idle people can have their confidence go on a downward spiral. Also, a sedentary lifestyle has negative effects on one's health. Our muscles and joints are meant to be used in movement. God designed us to be workers to care for His creation.

REFLECTION/APPLICATION

1. Pray and ask the Lord to increase your faith. In Deut. 28, we learned that for the Israelites to receive God's blessings, they needed to be careful to obey His commands. There cannot be true obedience without faith. To receive God's blessing, one must be able to listen to God's direction and do what He directs as revealed in Scripture.
2. Pray that God will increase your capacity and ability to work. Ask Him to give you strength and wisdom.
3. Commit to do physical work by helping at home and doing regular exercise. Take care of the body that God has given you.
4. If you are in Christ, then you are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your new nature includes a desire to live a godly life. In Ephesians 4:28, Paul wrote: *The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need* (HCSB). Notice here that diligence in work is directed towards sharing with anyone in need. Paul also wrote: *God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work* (2 Cor. 9:8, NIV).

Review (Knowledge)

Please take a few minutes to read the summary above. What is the highlight of last Sunday's sermon for you and why?

Sharing/Discussion (Practical Wisdom)

1. Read, Col. 3:17, 23-24. In your specific situation (i.e., workplace, school, home, etc.), if you do things heartily for the Lord and for His glory, how would this make a difference in *how* you do what you do?
2. In what area of your life are you struggling with laziness (whether at your workplace, in school or at home)? It is said that when you are lazy, others have to cover for you. Being lazy affects not just the lazy person but others too. Who are those people in your case? How are they affected?
3. How does building our biblical conviction regarding work allow us to grow to become more diligent and less lazy? Explain the biblical view of work in your own words (include pertinent Scriptural references).

Prayer

Take time to pray for one another.