

a Bible Lesson from PROVERBS 13:4:

THE BIBLICAL WAY TO EARN MONEY – HONEST WORK!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS “WORK?”

II. THE SLUGGARD CONDEMNS HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY TO POVERTY!

III. HE WHO WILL NOT WORK SHALL NOT EAT!

IV. HE WHO PROVIDES NOT FOR HIS FAMILY IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL!

V. IN WHATEVER “WORK” WE DO, DO IT WELL UNTO THE LORD!

VI. IN CONCLUSION, LET US WORK WELL, AS AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST!

VII. IN CONCLUSION

VIII. REFERENCES

## I. INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS “WORK?”

What is “work?” How does it fit into GOD’s ordained plan for man? And why do we see so many today steadfastly resisting it, choosing instead to wallow in ungodly laziness? Let us define the word “work,” and then see what GOD’s Word says of the matter.

Noah Webster defines the verb “to work” as “to move, or to move one way or the other; to perform... To labor: to be occupied in performing labor... One man works better than another; one man works hard; another works lazily. To operate; to carry on business; to be customarily engaged or employed in some work... To obtain by diligence.”<sup>1</sup>

Randy Alcorne observes, “Work is the GOD-ordained means for contributing to society, finding fulfillment and meeting material needs so we can provide for our families... In GOD’s ideal plan, every person is a worker. Regardless of age, ability or handicap, nearly everyone can make a meaningful contribution to family and society through work – even if it’s unpaid or very simple!”<sup>2</sup>

## II. THE SLUGGARD CONDEMNS HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY TO POVERTY!

PROVERBS 13:4 declares, “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.”<sup>3</sup> Here we have a picture of 2 opposites, the sluggard versus the diligent. And the earnest work of their earthly lives, or lack thereof, is a reflection on the state of their souls before The Almighty.

John Gill observes of the sluggard, “He desires knowledge, but does not care to be at any pains to get it, and so has it not; he desires riches, but chooses not to make use of the means, to be diligent and industrious, and so he is without them; he desires to wear good clothes and rich raiment, but is unwilling to labour for them, and therefore is clothed with rags; he desires food, and plenty of it, but refuses to work for it; and he that will not work should not eat, and therefore he has it not, but starves and famishes!”<sup>4</sup>

The soul of the sluggard is a dark place of gnashing of teeth, but never receiving, not only the physical blessings of GOD, but also the spiritual blessings that otherwise would, by GOD’s Grace, be his! So the lazy man “...desires Heaven and happiness, but does not care to do the duties of Religion; he would die the death of The Righteous, but is unwilling to live his life; to abstain from sin, and live soberly and righteously, is too hard service for him; he does not choose to do or suffer anything for The Cause of CHRIST

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<sup>1</sup> 1, Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, entry “work,” verb, p WOO-WOR to WOR-WOR, # 1,2,4,8.

<sup>2</sup> 2, Alcorne, “Money, Possessions and Eternity,” Chapter 16, “GOD’s Way to Earn Money,” p 281, paragraph 2 – p282.

<sup>3</sup> 3, KJV, PROVERBS 13:4.

<sup>4</sup> 4, Gill’s “Commentary on The Bible – Old Testament,” PROVERBS 13, Verse 4, p 232, paragraph 1.

and True Religion!”<sup>5</sup> This hand is ever outstretched and open to receive from CHRIST, but never willing to turn from evil, desiring a crown of Glory but without The Cross!

But the diligent, that is hard working man, receives both GOD’s physical and spiritual blessings. To him The Lord gives “increase in temporal things,” and is satisfied with the honest fruits of his honest labors. Even more, though he may still be poor by the world’s standards, yet “... in spiritual matters, such who are diligent in the use of means, constantly attend on The Word... [of GOD], and labour for the meat which endures to everlasting life; such are filled and satisfied, as with marrow and fatness; and become fat and flourishing, and fruitful in every good word and work; and shall at last arrive to That State where there will be no more hunger and thirst.” in Heaven Above!<sup>6</sup>

### III. HE WHO WILL NOT WORK SHALL NOT EAT!

Saint Paul declares in II THESSALONIANS 3:10, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”<sup>7</sup> What is Paul saying here? That there should be no such thing as charity towards the poor! GOD forbid, that is not forbidden, but always to be a constant work of GOD’s people, extending good works of both physical and spiritual care for those in need and who are suffering!

As our Lord reveals to us in MATTHEW 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy!”<sup>8</sup> As we are merciful towards others, so GOD will bless and be merciful to us. So Paul must mean something else here. And indeed, as John Calvin observes, “When, however, The Apostle commanded that such persons should not eat, he does not mean that he gave commandment to those persons, but forbade that the Thessalonians should encourage their indolence by supplying them with food.”<sup>9</sup>

The godly man will not be satisfied with indolence, either in body or in soul, but will diligently apply the skills and opportunities given by GOD to receive those blessings earthly and eternal as a faithful steward. So we read in PSALM 128:1-2, “Blessed is every one that feareth The LORD; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee!”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 4, Gill’s “Commentary on The Bible – Old Testament,” PROVERBS 13, Verse 4, p 232, paragraph 1.

<sup>6</sup> 4, Gill’s “Commentary on The Bible – Old Testament,” PROVERBS 13, Verse 4, p 232, paragraph 2.

<sup>7</sup> 3, KJV, II THESSALONIANS 3:10.

<sup>8</sup> 3, KJV, MATTHEW 5:7.

<sup>9</sup> 5, Calvin’s “New Testament Commentaries,” II THESSALONIANS, 3:10, p 221.

<sup>10</sup> 3, KJV, PSALM 128:1-2.

“For Paul censures those lazy drones who lived by the sweat of others, while they contribute no service in common for aiding the human race...”<sup>11</sup> But the upright man, most especially the Christian, will with thanksgiving and joy seek to provide by honest labor the fruits of his work, that he might fulfill his rightful duties before GOD and man! So the upright man says, “O GOD, Thou hast given me! Should I not give back to you and others? Thou dost enable me to provide for myself and my loved ones. I rejoice in giving my tithes and alms to the work of Thy Church and the honestly needy!”

#### IV. HE WHO PROVIDES NOT FOR HIS FAMILY IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL!

Paul declares in I TIMOTHY 5:8, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”<sup>12</sup> Recall that One of The Ten Commandments in The Law of Moses is in EXODUS 20:12, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon The Land which The LORD thy GOD giveth thee.”<sup>13</sup>

The man who is able to provide for his parents and children, and other relations in need, but does not, then breaks GOD's Law. And recall that CHRIST says in MATTHEW 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy The Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil!”<sup>14</sup> We do not cast aside The Moral Law when we put on CHRIST, but should come to keep it by the new Nature instilled within us by The HOLY SPIRIT.

Therefore Matthew Henry observes, “If any men or women do not maintain their own poor relations who belong to them, they do in effect deny The Faith; for the design of CHRIST was to confirm The Law of Moses, and particularly The Law of The Fifth Commandment, which is, Honour thy father and mother; so that those deny The Faith who disobey That Law, much more if they provide not for their wives and children, who are parts of themselves; if they spend that upon their lusts which should maintain their families, they have denied The Faith and are worse than infidels!”<sup>15</sup>

#### V. IN WHATEVER “WORK” WE DO, DO IT WELL UNTO THE LORD!

Paul declares in COLOSSIANS 3:23-25, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of The Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve The Lord CHRIST. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 5, Calvin's “New Testament Commentaries,” II THESALLONIANS, 3:10, p 221.

<sup>12</sup> 3, KJV, I TIMOTHY 5:8.

<sup>13</sup> 3, KJV, EXODUS 20:12.

<sup>14</sup> 3, KJV, MATTHEW 5:17.

<sup>15</sup> 6, Matthew Henry Notes, I TIMOTHY 3, Verses 3-16, II., v. 8.

<sup>16</sup> 3, KJV, COLOSSIANS 3:23-25.

When we stand before our Redeemer on our Day of Judgement, should we not desire to hear from His mouth, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" How will we hear such Words from our Lord if, in this life, we are forever grumbling with an unthankful heart and forever doing poor service with the gifts that GOD has equipped us with? If we do right, we shall receive crowns of glory Above. If we do wrong, we shall answer for all such offenses. For The King of the universe is no respecter of persons; He judges all men with equal justice.

Whatever work we are called to do, we should do it well. GOD equips His people with the skills and abilities we need for whatever work He sends us to do. And even when men do not thank us, or even worse if men treat us meanly in the course of our work, we should do the best we can and do it as unto The Lord. For if we are in CHRIST JESUS, He is our Ultimate Employer in all good works.

Let us consider what are we storing up for ourselves: Divine wrath through indolence to the flesh? Or Divine blessing through joyful service in the Lord? Saint Clement of Alexandria says, "The good man, being temperate and just, treasures up his wealth in Heaven... [For] It is not jewels, gold, clothing or beauty of person that are of High[est] value, but [Christian] virtue."<sup>17</sup> Whatever GOD equips us to work in, we may do it joyfully and faithfully in His Name, for as we receive the earthly fruits of our honest labors, we even more store up for ourselves an everlasting inheritance in Heaven!

#### VI. LET US WORK WELL, AS AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST!

Paul declares in II CORINTHIANS 5:20-21, "Now then we are ambassadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech you by us: we pray you in CHRIST's stead, be ye reconciled to GOD. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made The Righteousness of GOD in Him."<sup>18</sup>

Now as ambassadors of CHRIST, as Saint Leo The Great says, we should always show forth "Works of Mercy" under "the single name of Mercy." If we are indeed reconciled to GOD, then our very lives shall sing "Glory to GOD in the highest, and peace to His people on earth!"<sup>19</sup>

How so? In a living Faith that brings forth in us "love and compassion" to all, especially for "those in any kind of affliction." For then we shall be "blessed, not only with the virtue of good will but also with The Gift of Peace" in The Righteousness of CHRIST, Who knew no sin, but yet died for us! It was our sins that inflicted The Sorrows upon The Son of GOD at The Cross. Shall we not gladly then give some part back of what The Lord has equipped us to earn as a result of our honest labors?

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<sup>17</sup> 7, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, "Prosperity," p 541, 11<sup>th</sup> entry. "Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E), 2.280."

<sup>18</sup> 3, KJV, II CORINTHIANS 5:20-21.

<sup>19</sup> 8. Liturgy of The Hours, Book II, p 61, paragraph 1. "From a sermon by Saint Leo The Great, Pope. (Sermo 6 de Quadragesima, 1-2: PL 54, 285-287). Purification of spirit through fasting and almsgiving."

We are all equal ambassadors of CHRIST, though not in station, yet all in Grace and salvation. Therefore, for both rich and poor, if we have worked faithfully where ever GOD has sent us, we may have the joy of giving for the work of The Kingdom of GOD – in The Church, in our homes, in our communities! If offered up with humble and faithful hearts, “the intentions of all the faithful may be of equal value, even where their means are not!”<sup>20</sup>

## VII. IN CONCLUSION

The Lord ordains and calls all men and women to some form of “work.” Work for The Kingdom of GOD. Work to support himself and his loved ones. Work to contribute to the society in which GOD places us.

But if we are sluggards, not bothering to reasonably provide for ourselves and our families within our GOD-given abilities, it is not likely that we will lift a finger to contribute to the work of The Church! If we choose, through laziness, to condemn ourselves and our loved ones to poverty, our contributions to The Lord's work here and now will suffer as well!

We are not called to live slothfully, either in The Church on earth or The Church in Heaven, but fully blessed and productive lives. Part of our calling as Christians, being ambassadors of CHRIST, is to minister to those whom GOD places in our charge and care – our spouses, children, grandchildren, other family members. But lacking a heart for those closest to us, it is not likely we shall then have a heart for those who are more distant – our fellow Christians, our neighbours, even the stranger!

Let us not forget, that bearing The precious Name of The Son of GOD before The LORD and our fellow man, we are His ambassadors – both to the saints and to the lost. We have been reconciled to GOD as His adopted children in CHRIST. Let us then be faithful in the righteousness to which He calls us at The Cross. Let us not be found to be lazy sluggards, constant complainers or poor servants! Whatever work GOD has called us to, let us do it well in CHRIST for both our Lord Above and our fellow man here below!

Do we desire GOD's full blessing upon us in this life and in Eternity as His people? Then let us heed These Words in PROVERBS 13:4, “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat!”<sup>21</sup> In the Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

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<sup>20</sup> 8, Liturgy of The Hours, Book II, p 61, paragraph 1. “From a sermon by Saint Leo The Great, Pope. (Sermo 6 de Quadragesima, 1-2: PL 54, 285-287). Purification of spirit through fasting and almsgiving.”

<sup>21</sup> 3, KJV, PROVERBS 13:4.

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