

Victory over the Vain Cycle of Labor



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Labor is a key component of life. Mankind incessantly participates in its vanity. King Solomon spoke concerning this:

*Vanity of vanities; all is vanity ... What profit has a man of all his **labor** which he takes under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides. The sun also arises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to his place where he arose ... All things are full of **labor** ... (Ecclesiastes 1:2-6, 8).*

When Solomon writes of vanity, he speaks of emptiness, meaninglessness, pointlessness, purposelessness and futility – that relentless cycle of others who lived prior to us, and of those who will live after we are gone.

Why is labor so vain? The answer is really quite simple; it is because we have been so subjected by our Creator.

*... The creature was subjected to **vanity** ... (Romans 8:20).*

“Vanity” is thus the lot of those on earth. The daily alarm clock and commute ever attest to this fact. Yet, for those of us who trust our Heavenly Father, quite another view of labor can prevail! Instead of our labors being bound to such emptiness, they can rise to heights of divine life.

Solomon’s perspective showed the vanity of labor from the purely human viewpoint, “*under the sun*” – a vantage-point apart from God. However, Paul, our apostle, gave us a divine perspective, “*far above all heavens,*” revealing the true purpose found in labor, which can be only from the divine standpoint: “*your labor is NOT IN VAIN in the Lord*” (I Corinthians 15:58).

Those of us who know Father as the great Planner and Director of our days have a completely different approach to labor. Instead of being human and vain, it is divine and meaningful. It is HE who transforms futility into value, emptiness into fullness, and the mundane into the divine. For us, all things – even the apparent routine and commonplace – become the significant sphere of the divine.

We have work laid before us each day, but our work *is so much more* than a way of making a living; it is God living out His life in us. Ultimately HE is our employer; we really work for Him and His Son.

*Servants, be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, **as to Christ**; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but **as the servants of Christ**, doing the will of God from the heart; with goodwill doing service, **as to the Lord, and not to men**: knowing that whatever good thing any man does, he shall receive the same of the Lord, whether he is slave or free* (Ephesians 6:5-8).

In this passage Paul speaks to those who have the greatest disadvantage in their labor: slaves. In doing so, he covered the most extreme working conditions so that we would know that *all* labor – no matter how difficult, no matter how taxing – can be done “*as to the Lord, and not to men*” – “*whether he is slave or free.*”

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ... And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men (Colossians 3:17, 23).

Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

Work done for the Lord is honorable. One occupation is no higher or more pleasing to God than another. All work has meaning when it is done for Him. The life of God in us makes all things sacred. We must not confuse what we do to make a living with the purpose of our lives. Our occupations are just the context in which we carry out our divine calling. The circumstances of our earthly labors are but the backdrop of God’s working in our lives. They are the stage of the Master Workman.

We have been called into “full-time” ministry in the context of our personal daily life. Every area and every aspect of our lives belong to Him. No matter what the circumstances of life are around us, regardless of what earthly occupations we may use to supply our needs and those of others, we have a divine vocation to which we have been called.

Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called (Ephesians 4:1).

More often than not, the context of our labor can have the appearance of a monotonous, daily routine; but the very life of God running its full course in our day-by-day circumstances will make our lives anything but monotonous and routine.

We considered a portion of Romans 8:20 at our start – that God’s creation has been subjected to vanity – but now let’s read it all.

*For the creature was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who has **subjected the same in hope** (Romans 8:20).*

A work done for the Lord is *anything* except vain, for not only did our Creator subject us to vanity, but to hope – a confident expectation!

*Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that **your labor is NOT in vain in the Lord** (I Corinthians 15:58).*

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