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# Work

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II. Thes. 3:10. "Of any would not work  
neither should he eat."

These words of Paul to the Thessalonians are in harmony with the words of the Lord God to Adam after the eating of the forbidden fruit: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground."

Genesis III 17-19

But it cannot be inferred from this quotation that if our first parents had not sinned we would not have had to work, for Genesis II. 15 says, "the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it," much less can it be inferred that work is a calamity.

We can imagine some stickles for

logical consistency saying as he hears or reads these words of Paul: "The result of this would be that our infants and children, our aged and infirm, the sick and helpless are to be abandoned and left to die of starvation for these cannot work either with head or hand, and only such as can work are to eat. And granting this which is clear no infants would live to grow to childhood and youth, and thence to manhood and womanhood, and in the course of a little more than a generation the race would be extinct."

Surely Paul didn't mean that mothers were not to nurse their infants, nor to provide food for their almost helpless children, nor that we as a race were to become hard-hearted and cruel, and not give meat to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked; and leave the man who had fallen among thieves and was

stripped and naked and half-dead without  
pouring in oil and wine, and taking him  
to an inn that he may be cared for.

His idea was that no man had any  
moral right to be a busybody, living in  
idleness and not exercising the powers God  
had given him for his own good and that  
of others, but allowing those who were at  
work, and thus honoring and building  
up the church, to feed him. Of such an  
one Paul says; "but rather let him labor,  
working with his hands the thing which  
is good, that he may have to give to him  
that needeth."

Paul knew that the idle and lazy  
were the most susceptible to temptation,  
and that from the very constitution of man  
if he weren't doing something that was  
profitable he would be doing something  
detrimental, not only to himself but to others.  
Hence he gives to the Thessalonians this com-  
mand, which is as applicable to us as it was to them.

First the question naturally arises from the statement of our subject and the foregoing remarks, what is work? And in a few words we will try to answer it.

As it appears to us, work is the use of the powers of body or mind for a definite result. It may be for the benefit of oneself, that is the worker, or for someone else, or it may be that the work is no benefit to anybody, and there is a peculiarity about such that there is no neutral ground, no place where the work that a man does has not a beneficial or detrimental effect.

The work of the saboteur is an injury to himself and destroys others.

Then there is a work that perhaps benefits the worker if you grant that seclusion and isolation are good but does not benefit others. Such work is the building a high fence or wall around a beautiful garden or park. That fence

or wall is not pretty and there are no animals running at large that would go into it to destroy it. It was built to keep peoples' eyes out and allow the man to have this all for himself.

Selfishness is at the bottom of such work. For such a garden or park open to the eyes of the passer-by would give pleasant thoughts of God who so beautifully painted the flowers, and thoughts of goodwill towards the man that owned the property and used his time or work in making it so beautiful.

These kindly feelings in the mind of a man, on his way home from his business or his day's work whatever it may have been, carry to his wife and children some of the beauty and fragrance of the flowers, and some of the breadth of sympathy that was suggested by the open garden.

Again, there is work that benefits

the worker if getting pay for it, and good-will means pay, but which benefits one class and injures another.

The men who make swords and cutlasses, rifles and cannon, ball and shot and those who use them when their use is to kill other men. If you grant that it is a good thing to kill men, this work is quite legitimate, but if not, there is injury, and looking at it in its financial bearing it is a tremendous injury. Nearly every great nation has thousands of men, whose only business is to learn how best to kill other men in the shortest possible time, and when they have learned that to wait for an opportunity to use their acquired skill.

It would be nothing strange if some one should say that such work is no benefit to anybody, but a curse to all concerned. Yet that is hardly

correct, for as long as we believe in the right to say 'my' and 'your', as long must we grant that some power is needed to adjust disputed points, for disputes there will be as long as human nature has in it the longing to taste the forbidden fruit which will be as long as human nature is human nature. And the only power that can appeal to all is the physical power.

This work may benefit one class, that is, the class whom it protects. But even then it is a choice between evils.

But there is work which benefits the worker and others and has no detrimental influence on anybody.

The work of the machinist, electrician, tailor, baker, seamstress, laundress, housekeeper, all such work as tends to the production of grains, vegetables, and fruits; to their preservation, and their preparation for immediate consumption.

The work which results in beautiful and healthy homes, the increased facilities of travel and communication, the building of railroads and their stock, telegraph and telephone lines, the great steamships that bring us our tea from China and Japan, and our spices from the islands of the east. The work of such need not be selfish, for every such act performed is to the benefit of all.

Now we turn to consider why men work. Are men lazy? Do men delight to work? I believe that the man as an intelligent animal enjoys work not for the work itself but for what it accomplishes.

It is not the work they delight to do, but there is a certain purpose and to which a definite line of work is necessary if it is to be attained.

And the mind of the man is on the end to be reached and the work is only the means thereto. These ends are various.

The desire to have wealth, honor and a desire to make other lives bright and glad. But these are only a minority of the world's millions and a small minority too.

I grant that men are intelligent animals, but do we work harder to feed the body which is satisfied with the meat that perishes, and which we have in common with all animal life, or is the hard work put in to satisfy the hunger of the mind or heart? It seems to me that the first thought is about the hunger that is satisfied with bread and butter.

The questions, Who am I? Whence came I? Whither do I tend? What is this world? Is there another world that we cannot see? If so who occupy it and what are they doing? are left unanswered or even speculated upon while the stomach is craving food. So the immediate work on hand for such is to obtain that

which can be prepared for food.

From all that has been said we conclude that man in his animal nature is like the lower animals; if the appetite for food is satisfied he doesn't care to do any work and won't do it.

In other words man is lazy. But when he begins to think and purpose and has aims he may work to attain other ends. He may strive to answer one of the questions proposed by his own reason, as, what am I? This would be intellectual labor and perhaps his brain would sweat, but still the end justifies the endeavor. — And this could be duplicated in the work that has as an end rest or idleness because of wealth that is piled up.

Now all eat and no one brings anything into the world, and what is eaten is only fit for food because some one works and works faithfully for it.

least time sufficient to prepare the food.

Then if all bring nothing into the world, all are on the same plane and no one has any more call to labor than another other things being equal, and leaving out of account the amount of wealth that any one man may have in his possession, and which he can legally hold, and for part of which he can procure food enough to satisfy his hunger.

But right here we may be allowed to ask what is wealth?

Wealth in whatever form it is is the immediate or mediate result of work.

Gold and silver, houses and lands, railroads, telegraphs and telephone lines, steamships, merchandise, grain, vegetables, and fruit, are all the result of labor.

Now we may grant that one man can do as much work in a day as ten others, or even one hundred others,

and hence if he is frugal he ought to have ten or one hundred times as much wealth, but does such a comparison give us the true state of affairs in even our Christian countries? No, it is not so for some children are born with a thousand times as much wealth as some others whose parents have been just as honest and perhaps as saving.

Now you can readily see that although the child that has wealth need not work according to our laws that perhaps our laws are not just, and that this rich child when it reaches a time when it can work is morally bound to do it.

And if this is true for the rich, there is a double responsibility placed upon the poor. They ought to work because work is necessary to sustain life, and they haven't the accumulated

wealth in their possessions whereby they can purchase the labor of some one else, while they themselves live in idleness and have all they want of food and clothing.

Naturally the poor are envious of the wealthy. In some instances this envy becomes so strong that they would be willing by almost any means to get the wealth away from its owners, but no good would come of that, because it would be given to those who did not deserve it, and the rich who had lost would be angry, and endless trouble would be the result.

It seems to me strange that a poor man who is at work and is making money for some one has a right, if he has a good mathematical head and also sound judgment, to calculate what his

work is worth, and doing so he will perhaps find that he is not paid for all his work, but only for a part of it.

Is it possible for one man to get so enormously rich by his own efforts? It does not seem possible.

Perhaps I am bigoted but my judgment is that no man has a moral right (and legal right ought to be the same as moral right) to hold in his possession more property or wealth or piled up work than would be represented by the work that he himself did.

Surely in this land of boasted liberty, all our men and women ought to have an equal start in life. It is one ought to be handicapped in the race.

Many will tell us that we all are equal and we rich and poor, white and black, native and foreigner have an equal start at the word 'go'.

It seems possible for experts to find out about what amount of wealth any man could accumulate in a certain time, and have these on file, just as our statistics for death rates, and other statistical tables are arranged.

And then if that man dies an amount equivalent to what he could have accumulated in these years by honest work and careful saving would be allowed to his heirs named by himself, but all that he might have over that amount should go to the state and be used for the public good in some way or other.

This would not satisfy the greedy rich nor the greedy poor, but it would be just, and the thoughtful among both rich and poor would be aware that it was satisfied.

One might say there would be no desire to save money. Yes, there would be just the same honest desire

to do so, as under existing laws.

But it would wonderfully discourage all speculation that has in it the gambling spirit.

This would not bring us the millennium, nor will it ever come until Jesus' rule of doing unto others as we would that others should do unto us, becomes the rule of all lives, individual and corporate.

All men need food, no man brings anything into this world, hence what they eat is found here. It is made fit for use by work, and no inherent right is allowed one man to have others prepare this food for him.

Hence each man is morally bound to work or not to eat.