Work: Man's Problem and God's Solution

In Genesis 3:16-19 God reveals the consequence of sin for mankind:

16 To the woman he said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;

    in pain you shall bring forth children.

Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,

    but he shall rule over you.”

17 And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife

    and have eaten of the tree

of which I commanded you,

    ‘You shall not eat of it,’

cursed is the ground because of you;

    in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

18

thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

    and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19

By the sweat of your face

    you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground,

    for out of it you were taken;

for you are dust,

    and to dust you shall return.”

How did sin change the work God had assigned Adam?

What are examples of “thorns and thistles” that you face in your job?

Work is often hard and frustrating...and at times can seem pointless. Solomon wrote this in Ecclesiastes 2:17 (NIV): So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Has there been a time when you, like Solomon, have seen your work as meaningless? If so, explain.

In the account of the Tower of Babel we read this in Genesis 11:2-4: And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3**And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. **4**Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

What motivated the work of these people?

How have you sought to establish your identity through your work?

The prohibition of idolatry is repeated over and over in the Scriptures, and the Reformer, John Calvin, famously said, “The human heart is an idol factory.”

How can we make work an idol?

How can work reveal idols in our lives?

The Gospel changes everything. Paul wrote these critical words regarding the relationship between faith and works in Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9**not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

How does verse 10 compare with Genesis 1?

What good works has God prepared for you and me to do? Does this include our every day work?

In Colossians 3:23-24 Paul writes: Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, **24**knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

In your mind, what does it mean to work “heartily?”

How can we change our mindset from working “as for men” to working “as for the Lord”?

In Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, Solomon wrote this: I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; **13**also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

How is work a gift from God?