

Theology of Work

Genesis 31:1-7

Introduction

- Lessons from Jacob working for Laban
- Work is sometimes despised and even called a “four” letter word
- What is our theology of work?

Narrative – Jacob and Laban

- Jacob had tricked his brother and received the blessing from his father Isaac
- Esau wanted to kill Jacob and so Rebekah their mother told Jacob to flee to Haran and stay with her brother Laban

Genesis 27:41-43 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

- Jacob goes to Haran and meets and falls in love with his cousin Rachel

Genesis 29:18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

- Jacob agreed to work for Laban for 7 years in order to marry Rachel

Genesis 29:14-15 And Laban said to him, Surely thou *art* my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou *art* my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what *shall* thy wages *be*?

- At this point, Jacob had no income or possession, but Laban saw that he was a good worker as a shepherd
- Jacob served seven years and was ready to be married to Rachel, but Laban gave him her older sister Leah instead

Genesis 29:20-21 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

- Laban said he could serve 7 more years and then have Rachel
Genesis 29:26-27 And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.
- Jacob had several children and then when Joseph was born, he wanted to leave Laban
Genesis 30:25-30 And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give *me* my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee. And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry: for* I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give *it*. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For *it was* little which thou hadst before I *came*, and it is *now* increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?
- Laban's others sons thought Jacob was taking away all that was their inheritance, Jacob claimed that Laban was not honest as he had changed his wages 10 times
Genesis 31:1-7 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that *was* our father's; and of *that* which *was* our father's hath he gotten all this glory. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it *was* not toward him as before. And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

I. Working is a part of life and not a necessary evil

A. God instituted work before the fall of man

Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

- B.** The curse upon the ground because of Adam's sin brought upon hard work

Genesis 3:17-19 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: 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; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

II. Christians must understand that we don't work for man but unto the Lord

Colossians 3:22-24 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 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.

- A.** It is very easy to forget that we are not working for an earthly employer
- B.** Regardless of who we are serving as an employee – our Lord and Master is the Lord Jesus Christ

III. We should strive to work hard and avoid laziness

- A.** Working heartily

Colossians 3:22-23 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

- 1.** The emphasis is on working from the heart and soul rather than working to please men
- 2.** We should strive to do our very best in all that we do

- B.** Working hard

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

- C.** Avoiding laziness

Proverbs 24:30-34 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with

thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

1. Not doing what you are supposed to be doing at a certain time
2. We can be busy doing the wrong things

IV. Work involves submitting yourself to the authority over you

A. Showing respect for authority

Ephesians 6:5-7 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

B. Submission – willingly placing yourself under the authority

1 Peter 2:13-14 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

V. Working as an honest employee – fair business

A. Not stealing time or materials

Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

B. Honest business doesn't take advantage of one another

Proverbs 11:1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

C. Don't take advantage of Christian employers – don't avoid doing business with them but don't expect a discount either

1 Timothy 6:2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

VI. Balance Work with Rest and Home

Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

- A.** Need for physical rest
- B.** Leaving work at work and making the distinction between home and work

VII. Purpose of Work is to Live and to Give

- A.** Providing for you family – living

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

- B.** Giving to the Lord and others

Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

- C.** Avoid greed and covetousness – practice contentment

1 Timothy 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Luke 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Conclusion

- Jacob had to trust in the Lord even though he knew he wasn't being treated properly by his uncle and employer
- God blessed Jacob because he was a hard worker

Genesis 31:38-42 This twenty years *have* I *been* with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn *of beasts* I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night. *Thus* I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

- Laban still insisted that everything belonged to him, but out of the kindness of his heart, he would let Jacob have some

Genesis 31:43-44 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These* daughters *are* my daughters, and *these* children *are* my children, and *these* cattle *are* my cattle, and all that thou seest *is* mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.