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Great post from Joel McDurmon. Our family is taking this post and discussing it during one of our family worship times. If you have children still in the home, you might consider doing the same.

Below is the article and [click here](#) for a direct link to it...

Paul says, “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). Don’t feed a person who *refuses* to work. Lest any presume that I intend to bash government welfare with this thought, let me assure them that I reserve other Scripture texts and principles for that purpose, but here only intend to highlight the topic of “work” as the forgotten topic among many Christians. Why have I never heard a sermon on this topic, and why do so many Christians treat the subject as “secular” instead of as designed and ruled by God as anything else? Answers, of course, lie in the Gnostic, anti-earth mindset prevalent among the “heavenly-minded,” but I will leave these answers to another time. For now, I would like to reach into the past and bring to your attention a sermon once well-known throughout the English-speaking world—a sermon dedicated to the topic, “Against Idleness.”

“Against Idleness” comes from the second *Book of Homilies* published in 1562 under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (the first *Book* having appeared under Edward VI in 1547). Such “authorized” homilies aimed at providing the English churches with a model of preaching that reflected the Reformation in both content and character. [1] The first book, partially authored and edited by Thomas Cranmer, in general covers topics more doctrinal and theological than the second. The second in general realized the need to expand Reformation thought further into the practical areas of life (why it took fifteen years to figure this out I don’t know). “Against Idleness” best represents this practical thrust.

The homily directs us to creation, fall, and redemption in order to understand the central role “work” plays in the Christian life. First, creation: “Almighty GOD, after that he had created man, put him into Paradise, that he might dress and keep it.” [2] Then fall, “But when he had transgressed GOD’s commandment, eating the fruit of the tree which was forbidden him, Almighty GOD forthwith did cast him out of Paradise into this woeful vale of misery, enjoining him to labor the ground that he was taken out of, and to eat his bread in the sweat of his face all the days of his life (Genesis 3:23).” What changed between the two? Not that God *introduced* work, for he had created man for work originally (imaging God’s own creative and productive work). The change appeared in the *intensity* of work. After the fall, work became *labor*—thorns, thistles, and sweat.

In this atmosphere of fallen laborious misery, the Bible often emphasizes the dangers of avoiding, or escaping our duty to work. The homily begins on this theme:

Forasmuch as man, being not borne to ease and rest, but to labor and travail, is by corruption of nature through sin, so far degenerated and grown out of kind that he takes idleness to be no evil at all, but rather a commendable thing seemly for those that be wealthy, and therefore is greedily embraced of most part of men as agreeable to their sensual affection, and all labor and travail is diligently avoided as a thing painful and repugnant to the pleasure of the flesh, it is necessary to be declared unto you, that by the ordinance of GOD, which he hath set in the nature of man, every one ought, in his lawful vocation and calling, to give himself to labor: and that idleness, being repugnant to the same ordinance, is a grievous sin, and also, for the great

inconveniences and mischief which spring thereof, an intolerable evil, to the intent that when you understand the same, you may diligently flee from it, and on the other part earnestly apply yourselves, every man in his vocation, to honest labor and business, which as it is enjoined unto man by GOD's appointment, so it wants not his manifold blessings and sundry benefits.

Now that's an intro to a sermon! (these reformers could pack more substance into one sentence that most moderns could in a book). The message goes on to highlight biblical instances of these dangers. We have Paul's injunction given above, yet we have much more: Ezekiel tells us that among her principal sins, Sodom lie guilty of *abundance of idleness* (Ezek. 16:49, KJV), or "careless ease" (NASB). And what brought David occasion to spy Bathsheba, and then to conspire to commit adultery and murder? His *idleness* in staying at home while the very soldiers he should have joined and commanded labored in war (2. Sam. 11:1). What brought down mighty Samson? He whom no enemy could overpower, defeated himself through his own *idleness* (Judges 16:1–25). Idleness reduced God's champion, the homily says, to "the laughing stock of his enemies." The enemy, indeed, sows his tares, not while we work, but while we do not (Matt. 13:25). For these and other reasons, the homily rightly closes calling idleness "the mother of all mischief."

The Christian must never cease to let the Proverbs instruct us in regard to work. Idleness brings poverty, but diligence leads to wealth (Prov. 10:4). Stay behind the plow and you will reap produce, but follow idle persons and starve (Prov. 12:11; 28:19). Many people avoid work and make up many excuses, but they will take plenty of effort to beg later (Prov. 20:4). (All of these I have paraphrased, you will note.) And Solomon gives us this vivid parable:

I passed by the field of the sluggard, And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest," then your poverty will come as a robber, And your want like an armed man (Prov. 24:30–34).

Poverty does not just happen—it attacks, it mugs. Idleness is its chief opportunity. In this image, work is a security system, a theft deterrent. In home defense, it is a 12-gauge shotgun.

The corollary to all this includes the following observations: 1) The Christian life subsumes work, it does not exist beside it. Christians should see their "job" as a divinely appointed opportunity to create, produce, advance, progress, serve, etc. Don't see your job as just time spent among "secular" persons in which you might have a opportunity to "witness"; rather, witness your faithfulness *by* your diligence, integrity, and purposefulness *in working*. Else, your words mean nothing. "Work" is not what you do in between church services. Christianity is not what you do at the end of the work week. Rather, both work and church must express our Christianity, and we must express our submission to God's law in our service to others as much as in our church services. 2) In the New Heavens and New Earth, God's people will continue in diverse kinds of productive work. We will not waft through clouds among harping angels and enjoy an eternity of, well, divinely appointed idleness. No, we shall continue to image God in creation and production, in service, in communication and learning, and in keeping and tilling. Work itself shall not be removed, but labor. In both of these observations runs the common corollary that the Christian life should not seek to escape work, but rather reform and embrace it, longing for the day Christ sets things aright and removes the curse of sweat and thorns.

For one, I think so many Christians and Christian leaders have avoided this topic due to pervasive preaching against "works righteousness": "We're saved by grace, not by *work!*" Honestly. I believe so many have so strongly divided "heavenly" and "earthly" things in their minds based on this teaching that they denigrate all earthly matters, despite the fact that God has created, ordained, redeemed, and blessed the earthly realm for His people into perpetuity. Of course we're not *saved* by works, but this both misses the point and commits an equivocation. It equivocates because it mistakes "work" for "meritorious behavior" instead of "occupation" or "service." Worse, it misses the point in focusing solely on being "saved," or "born again," and not *what*

