

Redeeming Work
Don't Let Your Work Become Idolatrous
Romans 1:18-26

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 29, 2017

We have a tendency to take a good thing that God gave us and try to turn it into a God thing or an ultimate thing, so that we no longer need God.

Romans 1:18-26

We are guilty of a cosmic distortion, or vertical exchange, of the glory of God for something else in this world. This distortion is what reverberates inside of all our horizontal sin problems.

Paul draws our attention to the heart of the problem by using this word **'exchanged' 3x**:

- **v. 23** – He says we “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for something finite and created in this world”
- **v. 25** – He says we “exchanged the truth of God for the lie”
- In **v. 26** he uses the word “exchanged” to describe how men prefer men for sexual partners, and women prefer women

I. Your Work Should Never Be Your Ultimate Source of Satisfaction

Looking to your work for ultimate satisfaction is a deadly spiritual danger that can leave you devastated and empty.

“How did this happen? Why did I experience such a profound shift of my emotions and hopes? Why was my faith shaken so deeply? Looking back, I can see why. My hopes had not been rooted in God; they have been rooted in my circumstances – in my professional success and in my ability to control the future... My sense of well-being... was wrapped up in my professional success. Once that was gone, I was devastated. My god had been ripped out from under me. And I fell hard.” *The Gospel at Work*, Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, p. 22

Work is good and is a reflection of God, but it cannot bear the weight of your ultimate joy and satisfaction in life. Do not try to use it for what it was never designed to do.

II. Your Work Should Never Be Your Attempt to Make a Great Name for Yourself

The desire to be recognized for your excellent work can morph into a demand because of our sin nature. It drives us to be glory robbers.

If your success is dependent upon what others think, you become a slave to the opinions of everyone around you.

III. Your Work Should Never Be First and Foremost about Making a Difference in the World

There is something profoundly right about wanting to make a difference in the world around us, but even that can become idolatrous, when you gauge the value of your work by your perceived impact.

It is not wrong to want to leave your mark on the world, but that desire can become a self-serving demand that keeps you turning up your nose at lots of jobs because you are looking for something significant.

“Community service has become a patch for morality. Many people today have not been given vocabularies to talk about what virtue is, what character consists of, and in which way excellence lies, so they just talk about community service... In whatever field you go into, you will face greed, frustration and failure. You may find your life challenged by depression, alcoholism, infidelity, your own stupidity and self-indulgence... Around what ultimate purpose should your life revolve?... You can devote your life to community service and be a total schmuck. You can spend your life on Wall Street and be a hero. Understanding heroism and schmuckdom requires fewer Excel spreadsheets, more Dostoyevsky and the Book of Job.” David Brooks, “The Service Patch,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 2012

It is not so much what you do but how you do it and who you do it for.

“You don’t have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world. But you do have to know a few great things that matter, perhaps just one, and then be willing to live for them and die for them. That people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but who have BEEN MASTERED by one great thing.” John Piper, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, p. 44

Know and love Jesus Christ with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, then head into the workplace, and do anything, and you will be doing it in a way that glorifies God.

IV. Your Work Should Never Swallow Up Your Identity

What you do should never be synonymous with who you are.

You can serve the Lord Jesus Christ with a heart of gratitude that is not trying to achieve anything, but is secure in the fact that He has made you accepted in the Beloved and has given you a status in Christ that can never be taken or shaken.

Conclusion

The great exchange that all of us are guilty of from birth is that we turn away from the glory of our Creator God and choose instead to worship things in this created world.

In **2 Cor. 5**, we see another exchange that is the only hope for any of us breaking free from the cycle of exchanging the glory of God for something created in this world.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Without Christ, you are doomed to a life of deception, distortion, and disappointment as you chase the lie that you can be satisfied here in this world with something other than God.