**Vocation is Ministry**

*Our abilities, whatever they may be, are God-given. Our work, no matter what we do,*

*matters to God. Our jobs, well done, show our love for others.*

**Part Five: The Trauma of Sin on Work**

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and

the world’s deep hunger meet.” Frederick Buechner

**Movies: *Joe Versus the Volcano, Norma Rae, 9 to 5, Office Space, Swimming with the Sharks, Big***

**Observations**

Contextual Relationships: “Because you have” (3:17)

Vertical Relationships: Our response to God (3:7-8)

Horizontal Relationships: Our response to each other (3:9-13, 16)

Vocational Relationships: Our response to the ground (3:17-19)

“Cursed is the ground because of you (3:17) …until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken…for dust you are and to dust you will return (3:19).” “You”—you have no one to blame but yourself (14x). “From it you were taken” (Job 4:19; 10:19; 34:15; Ps 103:4; 104:29; Ecc 3:20; 12:7). The very first consequence of sin on work is that what was created for human benefit (the ground, 2:5) now works against them.

Hebrew word for Adam is the same as “ground.” The ground belonged to God which He sustained with water (Gen 2:3-6). Man was brought from the ground to work the ground (Gen 2:5). The ground would then produce food for human sustenance (2:15). After sin, maintenance of the ground brought with it hardship (3:17, 19) and relocation for production (3:23). Before sin, food came up from the ground. After sin, man would go down to the ground. The ground we once stood on we will go under. However, while the ground was cursed, man was not.

“Earthkeeping” (instead of “environmentalism”) or “re-Genesizing,” taking care of creation, is hurt by human sin (Lev 26; Deut 11:13-17). Deuteronomy 33:13-15 a fertile vs infertile land Deuteronomy 29:16-28. There are creational consequences that humans bring on themselves

\*“Through painful toil you will eat of it” (3:17). Pain and hardship accompany labor (‘aseb “sorrow”)—same word used for childbirth (3:15). Anguish (Gen 6:6; 45:5; 1 Sam 19:3; Ecc 10:9)

\*Resistance, recalcitrance. Earth will give up a harvest grudgingly.

\*“Eating” 5 times in three verses—the consequence of sin’s action (eating the fruit)

\*“all the days of your life” No end in sight: duration of toil from birth to death

“It will produce thorns and thistles for you.” Same word used of shrubs and trees in Gen 2:5, 9; the idea is that someone or something had to prompt the growth; thorns and thistles were now prompted to grow by human sin. “Thorns” comes from the Hebrew verb meaning loathing, repulsion, something odious, or contemptible; “this stinks.” “Thistles” comes from the Hebrew verb for trampling, treading, dominating. The only other time these words are used is in judgment (Hosea 10:8)—thorns and thistles are overrunning or overgrowing everything.

“And you will eat the plants of the field” (3:18). This idea bothered me for some time—why is this statement in the negative consequences section? There was some change from the fruit of the trees (Genesis 2:9, 16; 3:2). Eden was easy: fruit of the trees, picking. Outside Eden was hard: digging, standing up, bent over, “Oh, my aching back!” “By the sweat of your brow you will eat” (3:19). “Sweat” is close to another Hebrew word meaning “stench” or “a foul odor”

**Applications**

\*Sometimes we find ourselves in a work environment that just plain “stinks”

\*There is no “best place to work”…maybe better but not best

\*So much of how an organization functions depends on leadership…if leaders have appropriated the lessons of Genesis 1-3 they have gone a long way toward limiting and lessening problems

What if…I have a job with which I am bored?…my job does not meet my expectations?

…my business fails? … my work doesn’t “work”? Drudgery, difficulty, and the problem of doing something we may not like (be careful not to think that work is simply a means to an end, rather work w/ an end in sight). Whatever we do don’t be surprised by work’s pain, a lifetime of work, or the difficulty of producing a product “pain…toil…all the days”

About the time you think you’ve found the perfect place to work be careful you don’t ruin it; We are our own worst enemies (“you”). The very thing we may enjoy about our workplace may be the very thing that we loathe about our workplace (“eating the plants of the field”). Problems at work may be often brought on by ourselves; before pointing fingers however at “bad government” or “bad politicians” we should remember that we are the problem because we ARE the government and we ARE the politicians; we are all a part of the corrupt system.

GK Chesterton when asked “what is the problem with the world?” replied, “I am”

Employer/employee issues cut both ways—there are bad bosses and bad workers (Gen 3:16)

Employer—uncaring, (production over people), untrustworthy (dishonest), unteachable (no new ideas but theirs), uncommunicative (closed doors, closed mouths)

Employee—1.lazy, 2.procrastinator, 3. complainer, 4. thief

Economics—while individuals at times create their own problems, worse still is a government which tells individuals what to do (Prov 28, 29)—all systems, structures broken (Rom 8:20-22)

All systems have positive & negative effects. Success can breed expectations.

Reasons to hope: (1) Genesis 5:29 Noah “shall comfort us concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed.” (2) Mercy in the midst of sin’s consequence: Childbirth produces the next generation. (3) Work produces sustenance for people. When we practice our vocation we practice the greatest commandment: loving God and others

*Defiant Gardens* Kenneth Helphand. Chaplains in the workplace (chaplain.org). Kevin Belmonte *Hero for Humanity: A Biography of William Wilberforce*

**Working Questions**

1. How do we show appreciation for institutions—though fraught with sin—which maintain a structure and organization of life which we can count on?
2. Why do we tend to point at certain areas, ideas, people, functions, or structures as out of bounds for Christians when they are part of the created order?
3. What if my job is monotonous, boring, tedious, a drudgery? What if my job not fulfilling, not my gifting, not suiting me?
4. The questions to ask: Who has God made me? Where has God placed me? When has God allowed me to live? What has God given me to do?
5. How can my attitude be changed about work instead of trying to change my work?