

Created To Do God's Will And Work

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Now although this sermon is directed at men, the principles also apply to women and that is why I am going to begin this sermon in Proverbs 31.

The virtuous wife is about a woman who applies herself, works hard, and fears God, which is the most important thing. Now it also mentions her husband here. You get the idea from him being mentioned that he is also a hard worker and an impressive wise man himself.

Proverbs 31:10-11 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.

It takes mental, spiritual, and physical work to receive that gain.

Proverbs 31:13 She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands.

Proverbs 31:17 She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms.

Again, you do not strengthen yourself without work. Even exercise is work. There are many aspects in our lives that we do work.

Proverbs 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

Proverbs 31:28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.

Proverbs 31:30-31 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

The man-hating feminists, while supported by the deceitful progressive media, broadcast the myth that men are paid more than women because of discrimination, feeding into feminist false doctrines about patriarchal systems oppressing poor helpless women in the workplace.

In reality the wage gap, of about 19 percent, between the two sexes in the United States is explained by several reasons that have nothing to do with discrimination, including the fact that men work more hours and men seek less desirable jobs that pay higher.

Men account for 93 percent of workplace deaths, despite being only 54 percent of the workforce. 94 percent of workplace suicides every year are also men. The deceitful progressive media buries these shockingly high male workplace fatality figures because they completely contradict the myth that the jobs market discriminates against women.

Moving beyond the misconception of most of this perverted pop culture today, what about the work men perform? Is it necessary for the survival of mankind, and can women truly fill the void that men leave when they are not in that position?

Will the work performed in the Millennium be different from the work in Satan's world? What does God expect from men and women? After God pronounced judgment on Eve, He turns to the man, judging him last because he sinned last among the two.

Genesis 3:17-19 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

Now it is significant that almost all of the results of God's judgment, because of man's rebellion, relate in some way to the external or material world. The effects of sin are not merely psychological and mental, though sin does effect the mind and personality, they are also external.

This is of great importance because if the effects of sin are solely in the mind, by false reasoning, then we may imagine that sin, or at least the effects of sin, may be cured by human thought and reasoning. If this were the case then we do not need God and we do not need a deliverer.

In the very nature of things we might say, "The cure must be found in the God who made these things, who brought these specific aspects of His judgment on the world." God has acted in this way to keep the fact and the nature of sin before us and remind us, by every manifestation of it, that we do need a Savior.

Now getting back to Adam, the judgment on him was at least three parts. First, the ground is cursed because of him. Before it had produced fruit and every good plant in abundance, now, although it will still produce what is good, it will produce thorns and thistles faster and growing the food necessary for survival will become a real chore, not just work but hard work.

Secondly, Adam is condemned to live by the sweat of his brow. Before his work he had pleasure in his work. Now, although the nature the work is in itself still good, it will be accompanied by pain and weariness so that Adam might well say, as Job said in Job 7,

Job 7:1-2 "Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hired man? Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, and like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages."

The third of part of the judgment on Adam is that there is an end decree, an end that is not released but is disaster; it is death and the dissolution of the total man. God speaks of it saying,

Genesis 3:19 "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

There are two things we should see here. First that life is filled with pain and sorrow, and secondly, that in many respects it grows continually worse. This is what the introduction of sin has caused, beginning with Adam and Eve's sin.

We tend to think optimistically about things, thinking that we have a solution for every problem that comes up, that is the mentality of mankind. Our thinking is infused with the idea of progress, this means, in practice, that we tend to deny what is unpleasant. If we actually do acknowledge it we assume that it will eventually and inevitably go away. This is typical of human reasoning.

The trouble with this attitude is that life is filled with countless unpleasanties and whether we acknowledge them are not, they do not go away. Consequently, we must either acknowledge this, recognizing the unpleasant things and looking to God for strength to bear up under them and occasionally change them, or else be lost in frustration.

This is the very thing we are seeing in young men today, in this nation and in many other countries of this world. Many of the young are frustrated because they have been told and taught that life does not or should not have troubles. But life does have trouble, and when they experience them they are surprised and do not know what to do, sometimes they cease to function, paralyzed mentally because they are unprepared.

We live in a welfare society, whether we like it or not. More than half of the nation is on food stamps or some other grant from the nation, so the mentality of this nation is one of socialism which is sad because socialism does not promote work.

Most people are concerned about wages and when the time to make the annual budget comes around, employees are anxious to know whether they will get a raise, and if they are to get one, if it will be in line with inflation or if it will be something beyond that.

If their wages are based on a contract they are concerned about contract negotiations. Anyone who has ever had trouble with his or her wages should be interested in Jacob's relations with his uncle, Laban, a selfish, grasping, devious, deceitful, dishonest man.

Now Jacob, had he have been at the mercy of this man, would have left this world as poor as he entered it. His uncle was determined to give him nothing, only to use him. But Jacob had an ally who is openhanded, upright, straightforward, generous, and compassionate. His ally was God. We too have that ally no matter what our job is.

Now the secret of Jacob's success in working for Laban is that even though it was an unpleasant earthly relationship, he was really working for God. This is the lesson for us here, that when we work, no matter what we do, we are always working for God who will protect us and prosper our efforts, as he did Jacob.

Jacob tried to bargain with God, but God indeed prospered Jacob beyond his grandest dreams. We will read that here in Genesis 28.

Genesis 28:20-22 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone

which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

There you have Jacob's pillar stone, which is under the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey. Jacob was asking God for safety, food, and clothing, the basic needs for every man, but how much better he actually fared. Instead of mere necessities God gave him a large family and great wealth. Now we will turn to Genesis 30.

Genesis 30:43 Thus the man [speaking of Jacob] became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys. [That is where the real wealth was back in those days, in things that could be used to make money.]

There are a number of principles involved in the way in which Jacob grew prosperous and they are worth considering carefully. They are not the ways the world would advise a person to rise to the top of the economic ladder.

In dozens of self-help books the readers are told to be aggressive, to look out for number one, and is told how to dominate meetings. The reader is given advice on how to negotiate a better contract. Within certain limits, some of these techniques may be valid and useful, particularly when dealing with unscrupulous people, but that is not what God teaches. God teaches us to work for others and to work for Him.

It is significant that Jacob, who was really following God at this point, used none of those worldly techniques. He operated by different set of rules. The first principle is a strange one for a person who prospered as Jacob did, but it is important to see and understand it. Jacob was not trying to become wealthy and rightly understood that this is the initial key to all prosperity. The point is easy to see from verses 25-26.

Genesis 30:25-26 And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you."

It is obvious from the story that Jacob was not coveting wealth, and at the end of the his fourteen years of service, he is as poor as he was at the beginning, and in that poverty stricken state he is willing to end his service. Now during those years of service there would have been other opportunities for him to improve his finances and situation.

An unscrupulous man would have taken advantage of any and all opportunities to cheat Laban, as Laban was doing to him. Now considering how Jacob was deceived and how he had been used, even an average man would have at least toyed with the idea of laying up something for himself, but Jacob did not do that.

Faithful to his trust, not as an eye servant, but as one fearing God, he conscientiously devotes himself to Laban's work. He does not promote himself; he is not a social climber, he does not use any schemes of self-aggrandizement. He does not even complain about his own poor financial state, in which his father-in-law was growing wealthy by Jacob's hard work, he is so ungenerously keeping him in a virtual state of slavery, or at least indentured servanthood.

With patient endurance he continues to fulfill his agreement, when at last he proposes to leave his greedy kinsmen, it is without one word of complaint or rebuke about the past. He does not demand any more than his wives and children, for whom he alone, has faithfully served during these fourteen long years.

Not trying to become wealthy is exemplified by Jacob's unselfish service for Laban. It is the initial key to all prosperity. Let me explain this, first with a negative point.

Not trying to become wealthy in this sense does not mean being lazy, refusing to work, or taking aid from the government for example. A derelict refusing to work with his failure is not a key to wealth and will not lead to it. The apostle Paul was inspired to be very clear on this here in II Thessalonians 3.

II Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

That is a stunning statement, and I think that people just read over that and do not realize the impact of what God is saying here. If this is carried out in the letter then that man is going to starve or he is going to work.

II Thessalonians 3:11-12 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness [meaning with diligence and without complaint] and eat their own bread. [This is telling us not to receive food stamps although there are reasons for receiving such aid: widows, single mothers, people who are injured, and so on.]

So we see that it leads to not working, possibly becoming as bad off as being a busybody or gossip because you have too much time on your hands. From this we see that God is instructing us that we should always be working and whatever our hand finds to do we should do with our might.

This is part of the reason why many of the mainstream professing Christian churches reject this passage. Because they are actually socialist in their philosophy. This should come as no surprise. These churches have the social justice banner and they wave it often. Professor Charles R. Erdman wrote in his book, *The Church and Socialism*:

Some are insisting that Jesus Christ was a socialist and that the early church was established on socialistic principles. Others declare that socialism is merely the application of Christianity to industrial problems, that it is the duty of a Christian minister to preach socialism and the supreme function of the Christian church to introduce and support socialism as the one cure for all existing social ills.

Now again not trying to become wealthy does not mean a lack of concern for wealth itself. Jacob was not trying to become wealthy, but he was very much aware that his work was enriching Laban.

Those who try to become wealthy are those who tried to advance one's wealth at the expense of others. This is wrong by God's standards but it is also ineffective, which is to say that in the long run it does not work.

An employer who is determined to merely to get as much out of his business as possible will underpay his workers thus diminishing their desire to work and with it their productivity. He will neglect investing in the business as well which will result in increasingly inefficient production and an eventual failure to develop new products and markets.

This is exactly what happened to the major automakers in this country. And what happened? Were they allowed to fold up and fail because of their rotten business practices? No, the government stepped in and bailed them out. So what lessons did they learn? Nothing.

Now the workers who are working only for themselves and not for the prosperity of their company will harm their company. The powerful unions in this country have made that very obvious. Their low productivity, unjustified high wages, or wage demands means a higher price for the goods they produce and eventual ruin for the company when other businesses undersell them in the marketplace.

Docile, mentally weak males are more likely to support the welfare state and wealth redistribution of other people's work efforts. They cannot take on the larger challenges so they plead to be given to. It is all about getting something for nothing. Sadly that is the banner that this nation waves today.

Contrast this with the fact that hardworking, mentally stable men are more inclined to be generous and big hearted. Lace-hanky men complain about fairness, whereas real men do not. You never hear real man say, 'That's not fair.'

We all have our thorn in the flesh to bear. It is just that some of us are quieter about it than others which reveals another manly principle—fortitude. So what is profitable? The answer is to work for others, attempting to increase their well being and wealth before, or at least while increasing, one's own wealth.

Now just because you give someone something, whether it be money or some material thing, it does not mean you have the right to dictate to that person. That is interfering with what God is doing to work with them. It is good to be generous and it is good to help people in need, and we should, but there is a point where you have to back off and let them continue on from that point and work things out between them and God.

Interestingly there is a carefully designed plan in progress which is quietly being set up by the government to try to control all charitable organizations, all charitable giving. This will accomplish the taking over of a greater part of the economy, just as Obamacare is trying to take over one-sixth of the economy. It is all about power, greed, and control. That is the nature of a perverse government and when the people decline into such horrible sin.

This is the opposite of what real men are motivated by when working. Real Christian men and real Christian women work to benefit others.

Now in an article on thought tools entitled "Places I Remember" by Rabbi Daniel Lapin at www.rabbidaniellapin.com, Rabbi Lapin explains the Hebrew intent of the word "work" in Old Testament Scripture. He discusses some of the same things that I have been talking about here.

Every once in a while I will quote Rabbi Lapin and the reason is two-fold. One, he is a rabbi and he understands Hebrew and two, he has a gift for putting things in simple terms on how we apply that the application of Hebrew words. Now this is what he says about "work":

It is sometimes difficult to force yourself to do your work, is it not? Perhaps you allow the plague of procrastination to infect your soul. Maybe you find unproductive ways to persuade yourself that you're working, even though you're not doing what really needs to be done. How do we know what really needs to be done? One answer is whether the activity produces revenue for someone who is free to accept or decline your goods or services.

There is another way to know if we are doing work, perhaps cooking or taking care of our home. We can ask ourselves, "Who am I benefiting by doing what I am doing?" If the answer is, "Nobody" or "Myself" or even a vague, "Humanity" then you are probably not doing work.

Remember he is defining the Hebrew meaning of the word, work.

In the Lord's language, Hebrew, one word, *avodah*, is used for serving God and for serving His children—in other words, work. One way of serving God is through prayer and, though, of course, we can pray anywhere, there is an advantage to praying in a fixed place.

Abraham had a regular place to speak with God. There he prayed for Sodom [we find that in Genesis 18:23]. Amazingly, after God destroyed Sodom despite his prayers, Abraham returned to the same place to continue praying to God. [pause quote]

Genesis 19:27 And Abraham went early in the morning [to pray] to the place [Keep this word 'place' in mind. It is the Hebrew word *makom*] where he had stood before the Lord.

Continuing on with the quote here:

By contrast, less praiseworthy people than Abraham changed their places of prayer when they failed to get the results they desired. Rather than accepting a "no" or searching within themselves, they assumed the fault must lie in the geography and jumped from place to place. [pause quote]

Numbers 23:13 Then Balak [Balaam] said to him, "Please come with me to another place [*makom* again] from which you may see them [Israel]; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there."

Continuing on,

This word, *makom*—place—whenever used in Tanach, always refers to a space with some godly connection.

So thus when a special place is chosen, such as this site where the Church of the Great God was chosen to have the Feast of Tabernacles, it possesses spiritual significance.

It is true that we can do our *avodah*—work, meaning being both worship and work serving others—almost anywhere. I can pray on the bow of my small boat anchored off an island in British Columbia; we can write a thought tool intended to bring useful data into your life. However both prayer and work have an additional boost if I do them in a

fixed place—*makom*. Prayer is best when uttered in a space dedicated for that purpose and work flourishes when done in a place reserved for that purpose.

This is why one of the best ways of coping with the challenge of forcing yourself to focus on your work is to take yourself to the right *makom*; the correct place for doing that work. Even if you must travel, it is beneficial to recreate the feel of your work or prayer place as much as possible.

Now that is an interesting point, because if you have a place at home that you always pray to God and then maybe you change the location for some reason, you do have a harder time getting the concentration going. All he is basically saying here is that the familiarity of an area that you have set aside for that specific purpose does help and improve the situation, whether it be for physical work or for prayer.

Now remember that *makom*—place, in the Old Testament—always refers to a place with some godly connection.

Genesis 30:25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own place [*makom*] and to my country.

Jacob saw in his mind's eye that going back to his own place was special to him and was a closer connection God, at least in the sense of where he desired to be the most. When use figuratively, *makom*—place—is referring to a condition of the mind or body and that is where Jacob's heart was still yearning for after all these years.

Now the second principle that contributed to Jacob's prosperity was that Jacob work hard for his employer. If he had not wanted to work hard he could have found many excuses not to. He could have argued that Laban had cheated him in the matter of his wives and that Laban therefore owed him something.

He could have argued that anything he earned by his work would probably be taken from him, so that the work itself was unprofitable. He could have said, “God will take care of me; I don't have to work.” Jacob did none of these things, he worked hard for Laban and did not consider his work demeaning or meaningless.

Immediately after Jacob's request to be allowed to leave with his wives and children, he tells Laban, “You know how much work I have done for you.” Laban hated to admit this but he did not deny it. In fact he acknowledged that his own prosperity had increased noticeably since Jacob came to live with him and was due to Jacob.

Genesis 30:27 And Laban said to him, “Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake.”

So there was some good right there that came out of the situation. Laban was unconverted, but like many unconverted people, he recognized the blessing of God when he saw it and he knew that he had been blessed because of Jacob.

Later when Jacob had fled with his household and Laban had pursued him angrily, there was a confrontation in which Jacob apparently spoke his mind for the first time in two decades. It is the

most we are told that Jacob ever spoke on any one occasion. It had been bottled up in him for twenty years.

Genesis 31:36-42 Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: “What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set it here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both! These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night.”

Laban was stunned by this speech, but he reacted with mere bluster. He said that the daughters, children, and flock were all his. What an obvious lie, but it is significant that he did not dispute Jacob's claims to be self-sacrificing, upright, and industrious.

Evidently Jacob's virtues in this area were too well known for Laban or anyone else to deny them. Can the same be said of us? Are you known as one who works hard for your employer, at home, or for God's church?

Now let us consider what the Bible reveals overall about men and work. Unlike the biblical woman, the man is not defined as completely by his role in family relationships. Because of the curse placed upon men after Adam's sin, man holds a dual responsibility to be both a figure head in his family, and to be engaged in work that takes him into the field, which interfaces with the marketplace or that establishes him in the public square.

In the culture in the Bible, occupations are often diverse and usually exclusively male. Among the most common in the Old Testament are shepherd, farmer, and merchant, but we also encounter a number of kings and warriors, as you well know.

In the New Testament these occupations expand to more urban jobs such as fishermen, tent maker, tax collector, and scribe. Whatever the occupation, the man is encouraged to diligence and excellence yet admonished to be content in whatever capacity God has placed him in, even if it is a position of subservience. We see this very clearly here in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:5-10 Bondservants [or any employee], be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ [not as to an employer, but rather, as to Christ]; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. And you, masters, do the

same things to them [the employees], giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

We see here where we are to get our strength to bear up under good and bad bosses.

Now in addition to their occupations, men often play an important role in the communities such as being an elder who used to stand in the gates to discuss and judge local affairs. The man who stands at the gates is the epitome of wisdom and public success and thus men's roles in the community are normally of a more public nature than those of women.

Sadly the feminist movement has made every perverse effort to replace or destroy the male leadership, but God is in control and He sets up kings and leaders. Most examples of a leader in the Bible are men however there are a few, such as Queen Esther, as well as a few others. Even in recent times there have been good women leaders, Golda Meir of Israel and Margaret Thatcher. These are just some examples.

In the Millennium the people will inhabit the glorious places of the countryside with its beauty, tranquility, and township civilization. A typical identification of the citizenry of the millennial Kingdom is found in Ezekiel 28.

Ezekiel 28:25 “Thus says the Lord God: “When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land [place—*makom*] which I gave to My servant Jacob.”

The description of Israel remains dominant in millennial visions, though when viewed through the lens of the New Testament developments, the redeemed spiritual Israelites—the church—includes many who were Gentiles as well.

Because God is the one who inaugurates the Millennium through an act of divine restoration, many people often think of the Millennium as a state in which the redeemed simply move in and take their ease. But contrary is the case, the Millennium is a beehive of human activity and work filled with every visible industry on every hand. Some of this work is agrarian as people plant and harvest crops.

Ezekiel 28:26 “And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards[both are hard work]; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God.”
[Right here is the theme of the entire book of Ezekiel.]

The terms “safely” and “securely” are mentioned twice here emphasizing that you will not have to worry about being attacked or any harm coming to you or your property. Now even Amos paints a hyperbolic picture in Amos 9.

Amos 9:13 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.”

A leading feature of work in the Millennium is that it is productive in people who work to receive the fruits of their labor.

Isaiah 62:8-9 The Lord has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength: "Surely I will no longer give your grain as food for your enemies; and the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine, for which you have labored. But those who have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts."

So in addition to farming, architectural building will be evident everywhere, in fact the Millennium will be one of the greatest building projects on record.

Isaiah 65:21-22 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall enjoy the work of their hands. Building highways is also part of the picture. Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah 57:14, and Isaiah 62:10 speak of that. It will mainly be the city's that will be rebuilt, Amos mentions this in verse 14 of Amos 9.

Amos 9:14 I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

Isaiah 61:4 And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.

Sometimes even foreigners are described as doing the building. Amos describe that sometimes even God is the one who rebuilds personally.

Amos 9:11 "On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old."

A further part of the beehive affect of ceaseless human activity in the Millennium is the influx of foreign traffic into the area, apparently in a continuous bearing of tributes.

Isaiah 60:5 "Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you."

Isaiah proceeds to paint a picture of throngs of animals and people entering a place. We will continue on here in verses 6-14.

Isaiah 60:6-10 "The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall ascend with

acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory. “Who are these who fly like a cloud, and like doves to their roosts? Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me; and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the Lord your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you.”

The traffic will be continuous as it says, continuing on here in verse 11:

Isaiah 60:11-14 “Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession. For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the pine, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

That describes thriving Gentile nations coming to do business with the Israelites, many of whom will work for Israelites in the Millennium. There will be a tremendous amount of productive work going on and they will pay homage of course to Jesus Christ as well.

Now there is a third principle that contributed to Jacob’s prosperity. In Jacob’s impassioned speech before Laban in Genesis 31, Jacob trusted God for his prosperity and this of course is the most important of the principals and points.

There are no retirement programs in these pre-Christian centuries, in fact there is no word for retirement in Hebrew. There are no social security taxes or benefits. Jacob had something better than either of those—he had a God. God does not repay our contributions in inflated dollars, or steal from the fund and allow the benefit pool to dry up.

Notice a strange thing related to the remainder of Genesis 30, when Laban told Jacob to name his wages. Jacob replied that he would not ask Laban to give him anything, instead to him would belong all sheep and goats that with thereafter be born speckled or spotted.

Genesis 30:28-33 Then he [Laban] said, “Name me your wages, and I will give it.” So Jacob said to him, “You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. For what you had before I came was little, and it has increased to a great amount; the Lord has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?” So he said, “What shall I give you?” And Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and these shall be my wages. So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if it is with me.”

So he was doing the works part of faith, having faith that God would do the rest.

Genesis 30:34-36 And Laban said, “Oh, that it were according to your word!”[meaning that he agreed] So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had some white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave them into the hand of his sons. Then he put three days’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban’s flocks.

Today, and apparently back then also, the dominant color of Bedouin sheep is solid white and the dominant color Bedouin goats is dark brown or black. Spotted animals are in the minority and these are what Jacob proposed as his wages.

Moreover, he proposed to take only those that would be born thereafter and only those that would be born normally colored goats and sheep. This is why Laban removed that speckled animals from the others and place them in a three days journey away.

He may not have known much about genetics at that time, but he knew that speckled animals tend to give birth to speckled animals and solid colored animals tend to give birth to solid colored animals. Yet it was Jacob who proposed and welcomed this apparently disadvantageous arrangement, and he did so because he had faith in God.

His faith that God was going to bless him in spite of the cards not being stacked in his favor, and that he had been around animals for a long time and he knew that solid colored parents do sometimes give birth to speckled offspring, he felt very comfortable in making this agreement.

Now he would not be asking God for an outright miracle with no effort from him, but he would be depending on God to alter the percentages if he was to prosper. You have heard the old adage,” God helps those who help themselves,” and that this is certainly true here.

In addition to the speckled sheep and goats there was the matter of the partially peeled branches.

Genesis 30:37-43 Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which was in the rods. And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban’s flock. And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them [rods] in; so the feebler were Laban’s and the stronger Jacob’s. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

When Jacob took partially peeled, stripped, and spotted branches and placed them in the watering troughs so that are they would be in front of flocks, when they came to drink did he believe that merely seeing the striped and spotted branches would cause the animals to give birth to spotted

offspring? No he did not. God commanded him [Genesis 31:9-12] to set up a striped branches, which he did, not as a physical means to add to the end of producing striped or spotted offspring, but rather as a symbol of Jacob's faith and obedience.

Remember in a parallel situation God later caused Moses to set up a bronze snake in the wilderness when the people had been bitten by serpents. The people were not healed by the snake, they were healed by God through faith expressed in their obedience in looking to the snake. They were not looking to the snake for any power or healing, rather it was a symbol of what God was going to do.

In a parallel, but not identical way, Jacob's trust in God would have been similarly rewarded. In the next chapter, Jacob speaks of having had a dream about streaked, speckled, and spotted cattle in which God spoke to him. It may be that God told him what to do on that occasion.

Now what do we have to do to righteously and successfully perform our work? Haggai did not deny that the new temple was as nothing in comparison to what Solomon had built, but that was not important. The important thing was that this was God's work and they could depend on him to help them finish it.

To encourage them Haggai used the term "be strong" three times: to the governor, the high priest, and to the people who were working on the Temple. Those words, "be strong" were very significant to them.

Haggai 2:4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts.

God inspired Haggai to encourage both the leaders and the people to move ahead in God's strength. They were being heartened to move from their past reflection to present action by means of a series of urgings.

God's presence emphasized in these words "I am with you," forms the basis for their ongoing work in the face of pessimism. So when we get down, become negative, or become discouraged remember these words: "I [God] am with you," and "be strong."

Now as you know, every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites had the book of Deuteronomy read to them, so they knew of the record of the three times Moses told Joshua and the people to "be strong," found there in Deuteronomy 31:6-7, 23. No doubt they also remembered three times the Lord told Joshua to "be strong" in Joshua 1:6-7, 9.

And also when King David charged Solomon with the task of building the original Temple he told him three times to "be strong," which is found in I Chronicles 22:13; I Chronicles 28:10, 20.

"Be strong" was not an empty phrase. It was an important part of Israel's history and it should be an important part of our history as well, as the church of God. If you think about what the church has gone through for the past 2000 years, the persecutions, the martyrs and the things they had to endure, they had to have been strong to survive. And where did they get that strength? God says "I am with you."

It is one thing to tell people to be strong and work, but it is something else to give them a solid foundation for those words of encouragement. Haggai told them why they should be strong and work, it was because it meant that the Lord was with them.

By their diligent effort to continue to work on God's work they show their faith in action. In contrast faith without works is a dead faith. The promise of God's presence was the encouragement to both Joshua and Solomon. The Lord said to Joshua in Joshua 1,

Joshua 1:5-6 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

To "be strong and of good courage" requires faith and faith instills confidence in that which we place our faith. A lack of faith produces worry and fear. Even hard-working people worry about material needs and desires in various ways. Jesus Himself understood this human proclivity to worry and so he addressed it, emphasizing that we are not to worry about our needs. We will read of this in Matthew 6. This is also in Luke 12:22-31.

Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

So worrying can be a deficiency of faith, not necessarily a total lack of faith. Needs are supplied according to God's timing sometimes God lets us sweat a little so that we realize who supplies our needs. This is the life of daily faith. We cannot just have faith one day and then not have it the next yet say we are faithful.

The meaning of the Hebrew root word from which the English word "faithful" comes, suggests firmness, stability, or strength. Here are some synonyms for faithful: steadfast, trustworthy, steady character, loyal servant, unfailing care, will not fail, hold fast. Faithfulness requires supporting activity and intimate relationship.

The lesson we learned from Jacob's life is that he consistently trusted God and that we are to do the same, especially in regard to spiritual matters, but also in regard to our material possessions. From Jacob's faithful example we see three vital principles which are: 1) Do not intentionally try to

become wealthy. 2) Work hard for God, your family, your employer, and brethren. 3) Trust God for your needs and prosperity.

Now does this mean that if any of us should do this conscientiously that person would become rich? Not necessarily and probably not, but that is what we were supposed to do—we are to work hard at all these things. You are not even to be seeking to be materially rich, however it does mean that you will spiritually prosper and that God will also provide your physical needs, not our greeds.

We can claim the same promise, as we serve God, that we are promised in Hebrews 13 which says:

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Although sin grows worse and with it, sin’s troubles, God is unchanged and His mercy endures forever, from generation to generation. We see it in the judgment of the Adam and Eve.

It is true that Eve and those who followed her are subjected to pain in childbirth, but sorrow is afterward mostly forgotten for joy that a child is born into the world, and one of those births produced the Savior.

In addition, woman sometimes enters into conflict with their husband, but this is not with one who is a stranger or even in her enemy, but with one who loves her and of whom submission is often pleasant.

As for men, although the ground is cursed for his sake, nevertheless the land is not made entirely unproductive but rather, with hard work, yields its fruit in its season. Although God cursed the ground, He also sends rains and snow to water it, making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater. Man sweats but revives; he dies but he will rise again if he is obedient to God.

In the final analysis, the greatest mercy of God is seen in His taking the full curse of the punishment of our sin on Himself to remove the curse; the penalty of a law on those who work to remain faithful and work to glorify God. There are interesting parallels of sin’s effects between Adam and/or Eve and Jesus Christ.

Did sin bring pain in childbirth? Hebrews 2:10 expresses that no pain is equal to Jesus’ who travailed in pain in order that He might bring forth many children into glory.

Did sin bring conflict? Hebrews 12:3 says Jesus endured even greater conflict of sinners against Himself for our salvation.

Did thorns come in with Him? John 19:2 says that Jesus was crowned with thorns.

Did sin bring sweat? Luke 22:44 states that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood.

Do we know sorrow? Isaiah 53:3 cries that He was a Man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.

Did sin bring death? Hebrews 2:9 declares that Jesus tasted death for everyone.

Is that not interesting how lives the parallel so interestingly. These show, in a direct specific manor, how Christ suffered for us. Jesus took our curse, as Paul says in his writings to the Galatians in Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).

He became a curse so that we might be set free to live and work for God through Him.

So what does God intend for us to do? Man was created for fellowship with God, and unlike any of the other creatures, he has a fundamental likeness to God. He is created in the image of God, and he met and talked with God in the Garden of Eden.

Ultimately our Redeemer Jesus Christ was sent for this reason as well and we are not only meant to have fellowship with God, we are to glorify Him by what we are, what we do, and how we work.

I Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

We are created to do God’s will and work and we are created in God's image so that we might have dominion over the rest of creation and perform God's work of ruling the creation in His place.

God’s intention for us worshipping, serving, loving Him, and working to glorify Him, is of all the creatures, given only to mankind as a sanctified privilege. How thankful we can be for what God has given us even in the area of work.