

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

BIBLE TEACHINGS ABOUT WORK.

Mark 6:1-3; John 5:17; 2 Thess. 3:6-13.

April 17, 1921.

Golden Text: Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.—Rom. 12:11.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 121.

Reference Material: Ex. 20:9-11; Prov. 22:29; 28:19; 31:10-31; Eph. 4:28.

Primary Topic: A Child Who Helped.

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Lesson Material: Ex. 2:1-10.

Memory Verse: Even a child maketh himself known by his doings.—Prov. 20:11.

Junior Topic: The Ant and the Sluggard.

Lesson Material: Prov. 6:6-11; 25:4; 24:30-34; 26:13-16.

Memory Verses: Prov. 6:10, 11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Workers or Shirkers.

Lesson Material: Prov. 6:6-11; 20:4; 18:9; Mark 6:1-3; John 5:17; 2 Thess. 3:6-13.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Labor Problems.

Work is honorable in all men. Men are apt to think of work as a curse and connect it with the curse of Eden. But it should be remembered that God had given our first parents work to do in the garden of Eden, before sin blighted their lives. God knew that man could not be comfortable or happy, if his time were spent in idleness, and so He gave Adam and Eve the care of the garden. Work is God-given to all men, and for that reason it should be considered honorable and a blessing. No man continuously idle from choice ever became strong physically, mentally or spiritually.

If any other proof that work is honorable is necessary, we have it in Jesus of Nazareth. Though He was the Son of God, when He came to earth He was born of a woman whose husband was an ordinary working man. Jesus did not make His home in the palace of a king or the mansion of the wealthy where He could have lived in luxury and ease to be secured by riches. He came to the home of a carpenter.

In accordance with the custom of the Jewish people, He learned a trade, for every boy among them was required to learn some manual trade. Naturally He learned the trade of him who stood in the place of father to Him, and became a carpenter. The term carpenter was much more general in its meaning than it is to-day. A carpenter not only built houses, but did all kinds of work in wood, such as making furniture and other household utensils, and yokes and plows and other farming implements. We know nothing of Joseph after Jesus was twelve years old. Tradition says that he died while Jesus was still young, and that He had to support His mother and His four younger brothers and His sisters by His own work. We may be very sure that He was diligent, careful and faithful in His work.

In the days of the Chinese empire it was customary for the emperor to be out into the fields on a certain day in the spring with great ceremony, and taking hold of the handles of a plow to plow a short furrow, to show his subjects that there was no disgrace in manual labor. Our great King did not labor just for show, but in order that He and those who were dependent upon Him might have the necessities of life. We may well believe that His labor was such that He could provide His loved ones with reasonable comforts. We cannot think of His not doing as well as any other carpenter, though of course He used only His human powers in His work.

If the King of kings and Lord of lords could leave heaven and come down to earth and work with His hands, we ought never to feel that manual labor is dishonorable in any one. We should do whatever work is given us to do with the same diligence and honesty with which we are sure He did His work.

Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, was a man of great learning, and he was probably the son of a

well-to-do man, as he had been able to go to Jerusalem to be educated by the greatest teacher of his day. But his father, though he lived in a rich heathen city, did not fail to carry out the law of his people, and require his son to learn a trade. He chose that of tent-maker. This required that he should card and spin the goat's hair, out of which cost tents were made, and weave it into cloth and then sew it together into a tent.

Paul was a man of prominence and influence in Jerusalem. He was probably a member of the Sanhedrin. His learning and his eloquence would have ensured him a living anywhere. But there were times when he was not willing to accept even living expenses from those to whom he preached.

As he worked he preached the gospel to those with whom he toiled and won them to Christ, and on the Sabbath days he preached in the synagogues (Acts 18:1-4).

Before William Carey went out as a missionary he was a shoemaker, but was very active in Christian work. When some one asked him what his business was, he replied, "My business is to win souls for Christ, and I cobble shoes to pay expenses."

'Men of genius have left it on record that they viewed their years of obscurity as merely a prelude to their years of fame. Self-made men glory in the humble origin which makes their success appear all but incredible. But in all the gospel records there is not a single word, or even a hint, to suggest that Jesus regarded His years of manual labor as an inferior stage of His life—a mere foil, indeed, to His public ministry. Thoughts of all that lay beyond the carpenter's shop were surely ever with Him, yet we cannot imagine Him working with slack hand, while He dreamt of future glory. His parables

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