

The Protestant Work Ethic **1Samuel 17:12-22**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-31-2010

Introduction – without the Protestant Reformation’s doctrines, the Protestant Work Ethic (and beneficial Capitalism) will not prosper.

How many here have heard of Max Webber’s thesis, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*? How many here have heard of the phrase, “The Protestant Work Ethic?” He’s the one that coined the phrase. And ever since 1904 when he demonstrated that it was only the Protestant Reformation that had the needed worldview to unleash Capitalism, his thesis has been under attack. And I’ve read a lot of those attacks. Obviously it is not popular with Roman Catholics or with Muslims. But so far, there really has not been a successful overturning of his central thesis. In fact, in October of 2007, the American Journal of Economics and Sociology published the results of a massive new study by Horst Feldmann, from the University of Bath. It was based on data from 80 countries. And it just reaffirms Max Webber’s thesis. And interestingly, he pointed out that even though belief in predestination and other doctrines has vanished in many Protestant Countries, the remnants of the Work Ethic that flowed from those doctrines remain. We still have some of the fruit, even though we are losing the root. And he conclusively showed that Protestant nations have the best employment rates and the best success rates on many economic criteria, despite punitive interventionism by the state that is anti-Reformation, and despite the increasing loss of Reformation values. In another generation we will probably lose even those fruits. But at least this secular study is reaffirming the value of worldview. They may not like the worldview, but they see the good fruits.

Today is Reformation Day, and you know that I have taught for years that the Reformation doctrines absolutely transformed Europe. Contrary to what some people naively think, many authors have demonstrated the truth of this statement (which I will quote from one of them): “The doctrine of predestination laid the foundation for the work ethic.” That was not a Calvinist who wrote that. That was a secular study. And many people think, “Why? That can’t be. Surely predestinarianism will turn men into passive people who don’t accomplish anything.” But even secular studies have

shown that Calvinism produced the exact opposite. They show that Calvinism produced industry, private hospitals, charities, missions, zeal in warfare, zeal in evangelism, and far greater industry in the workplace than you will ever find in Roman Catholic countries. Why? There are many reasons, but one reason is that when our destiny in heaven is settled and secure, the energies of man can be unleashed in serving God in earth rather than nervously working on getting to heaven our whole lives.

Another example: the doctrine that God alone was Sovereign, limited what the state could interfere with in the market place, and added its own impetus to capitalism. The doctrine of total depravity made citizens distrustful of any kind of coercion in the market place. And you could look at many other doctrines that freed up society to prosper and grow. Gene Veith said, “Medieval Catholicism taught that spiritual perfection is to be found in celibacy, poverty, and the monastic withdrawal from the world, where higher spiritual life is found. But the reformers emphasized the spiritual dimension of family life, productive labor, and cultural engagement.” And we will be looking at some of those things today.

Though Max Webber has perhaps the most extensive writing on the subject, John Wesley was able to condense it down into three words, which are the three main points of your outline. He said, “**Work** as hard as you can; **save** as much as you can; **give** as much as you can!” Work; Save; Give. Let’s look at each of those three (and because of our text, we will spend most of our time on the first one). This is going to be kind of a mix between a textual and a topical sermon. These ideas are all here, but we might occasionally supplement from other passages.

I. Work

A. The value of a family business (v. 12,13,15,20)

First of all, work. And there are many dimensions to a Biblical view of work that we won’t even be able to get into. But verse 12 begins by pointing us to a family business. “**Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul.**” And as you go through the passage you will see that the father was running the business. He gave commands, and verse 20 says that David “**went as Jesse had commanded him.**” And in most of the businesses of that day, the head of a business was dad, or a brother, or an uncle. Between this chapter and chapter 20, Jesse apparently hands over the reigns of the business to one of David’s brothers (even though he was still alive in chapter

20; in fact, he was still alive in chapter 22), and David said, “**my brother has commanded me to be there**” (v. 29). So at that point, even though David is married and has his own family, his brother is in charge and is giving orders. That may all seem very strange in our modern culture. What authority does a father have over sons when they are grown, and what authority did this brother have over David? And the answer is simple: he has the authority of a business owner, not the authority of the head of a family. This is in no way a violation of the commandment to leave your father and mother and cleave to your wife (Gen. 2:24). A husband leaves a father’s authority to govern the internal affairs of his *nuclear family* when he gets married, but if you are part of the *extended* family business, there is still someone who needs to be in charge of the business. He is not in charge of your nuclear family, but he may still be in charge of the business. And so if you think of the three governments and their totally separate jurisdictions, this passage will make sense.

We have drifted so far from the Reformation and have been so influenced by the secularizing aspects of our nation, that a family business like David was in here doesn’t even seem like an option. It seems foreign to us. But it is a brilliant alternative to modern corporations. I was going to get into a big discussion of how corporations have often (though not always) weakened the family. Because of time, I won’t be able to do that. Some people think of corporations as the essence of the free market system, but it is my contention that corporations (especially big multi-national corporations) have been the thorn in the side of true free market capitalism. They have many times been the biggest enemy to the family and to Christianity.¹ They have certainly been the biggest promoters of big government. I’m not willing to say that all corporations are sin, like Dabney

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1. ¹ They are not a biblical entity. That doesn’t mean you can’t do them, but it ought to at least make you think.
 2. They involve the civil government in the market place and blur the lines of jurisdiction between family, church, and state.
 3. Because of their lack of liability, they shield those who make bad decisions from being held accountable to those that they harm. The Reformers would have fought against that limited liability.
 4. Because of their lack of liability, they have become powerful forces of social engineering. If you want some examples of this social engineering, see what big corporations are doing to promote homosexuality by force.
 5. They provide a perpetual means of controlling wealth outside of the biblical model of the family. This is perhaps one of the most destructive features of corporations to me. It completely undermines God’s purpose for covenant succession of wealth being within the family.
 6. They make it more difficult to raise up dynasties of influence.

did. But they have often become the means for keeping wealth outside of the family. Sometime just read what the Reformers said about how corporations (and especially the Roman Church) had gobbled up family capital and ruined family businesses. The family was seen as the essential instrument of business. Family business was a lynchpin in their theory of capitalism. And there are at least some homeschoolers who want to turn back to the concept of the family business.

B. Division of labor - The dignity of all lawful vocations

1. The privilege of changing jobs (v. 15)

But some people have gone too far on this first point and want to entrap all of their kids in the family businesses, irrespective of their desires or gifts. So point A needs to be balanced with point B. Since the nuclear family is the foundation of society, continuing in an extended family business is totally optional. Prior to the Reformation that was not always true. In fact, in some countries it was illegal for a son to go to a different trade or profession than the father. And the Reformation changed all of that and made economic mobility possible. I think point B hints at a needed corrective to hyper-patriarchalism. Hyper-patriarchalism has not been sensitive to the differences between the nuclear family and the extended family, and how business fits into both.

On the issue of job mobility, look at verse 15. **“But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem.”** In the previous chapter David had already started apprenticing with Saul for another job, and that was not considered betrayal in the Bible. And throughout the Scripture we see that people exercised this option. Now that is not revolutionary for us. We are used to that. But it was revolutionary at the time of the Reformation. And it happened because going back to the Bible liberated people. In fact, God set things up in the Leviticus land laws to almost force family members to leave the farm and start businesses of their own at some point. Gary North deals with this a great deal in his economic commentary on Leviticus. This is simply recognizing that division of labor and specialization was built into the Biblical system, but erupted forth when the Reformation allowed for it.

2. Civic duty (v. 13, 15a)

And (according to many scholars) one of the Reformation doctrines that precipitated this was vocation or calling. If Jesus served God faithfully as a carpenter for 30 years, we can hardly relegate carpentry to a lower

honor than being a monk. No – carpentry was a calling for Jesus. That means that it can be a calling for us. If Romans 13 uses the same word (minister) to describe a civil magistrate that it uses of pastors, when it calls them servants of God, then we can hardly call civil office a secular job. All of life must be spiritual – which means it must be lived under the Lordship of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, according to the principles of God’s Word.

One of the things that the Reformation taught was that our involvement in civic affairs is a duty and a calling. David’s brothers serving in the military in verse 13 fits into that, as does David’s calling to be an armor bearer for Saul in chapter 16:21, which we are reminded of in our passage in verse 15

3. Shepherding (v. 15b)

Verse 15 also says that David was a shepherd. The Bible elevates the work of a shepherd in several places of the Bible to a noble calling that is truly service to God.

4. Delivery (vv. 16-17)

And then, of course, David becomes a delivery boy in verses 16-17. I don’t need to belabor these points. I think they are fairly obvious. But this division of labor and specialization that the Bible speaks of throughout the Old Testament was absolutely liberating to that Reformation generation. And the results of this teaching turned stagnation into prosperity. Don’t ever think that Reformed doctrines are not practical. They are. And it is high time that the Evangelical Church gets back to the Reformation. I think Reformation doctrines are the solution to the problems flowing out of Washington, DC. They are the solution to the socialistic ideas that are rampant in the church.

C. Yet the priority of the family

1. Only three sons could fight at a time (vv. 13-14; see 2Sam 31:6; also Deut 20:5-8)

But I’ve inserted point C to reiterate that the family was more of a priority than the church or the state. Neither church nor state could gobble up what was given to the family jurisdiction. Notice that verses 13-14 make it unmistakably clear that not all eight sons were serving in the military. Some commentators have been puzzled over that, but not the Reformers. Let’s read those verses. They say, “**The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone**

to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul.”

We know that David was about 18 years old in this chapter – too young to serve in the army. But that means that there are four brothers between David and Shammah, and at least three of those *would* have been old enough. Why were they not serving? Well, there was a rule that only three sons were required to serve in any given battle, so that the family as a whole would not be lost. This is why in 2Samuel 31:6 you find that only three of Saul’s sons were fighting in the last battle where they died. He had other sons who were plenty old enough, but only three could serve. What does this mean to me? It means that family perpetuity trumps state perpetuity.

And as Charlie Rangel proposes to Congress that the President have a civilian security force as big as the current US Military, and wants them to mandate that every civilian between the ages of 18-42 have compulsory service for two years, it is helpful to know that the Bible says that service to the state is voluntary, not compulsory. Deuteronomy 20 is clear on that.

2. While serving, David helped out his father (v. 15)

And we saw in the last chapter that even Saul had to ask permission of Jesse for David to serve with him. And because of the age of his father, David still has freedom in verse 15 to tend Jesse’s sheep when needed. To me this is a marvelous protection of family interests.

In medieval times this began to be eroded. There was always a tug of war between church and state as to who was the greatest, and who would dominate the others. There were times when the church ruled over the state and there were times when the state ruled over the church. But the family was completely left out of the equation. The family was a non-issue and taken for granted. But that was destructive to the family.

When the Reformation came around, the Protestants restored the family to its dignity, authority, and jurisdiction. They recognize that there were things that even a bad government like Saul’s could not do to a family. The Reformation restored family, church, and state as three sideways governments that were not over each other, and though the family was weakest in some ways, the Bible restored it to being the most important. How? Well, one way it protected the family was to make the family the most basic unit of both church and state, and thus they only allowed male head of household voting in church or in state. And the economic implications are enormous. Democratic individualism in America is destroying some of the

wonderful fruit that flowed from this Reformation emphasis. And again, we won't have time to deal with all of the implications, but I just want to put some seeds into your mind of what kinds of ideas revolutionized Europe after the Reformation.

D. Value of industriousness (v. 20a)

The fourth facet of the work ethic that is important to mention is the value of industriousness. In verse 20 it says, “**So David rose early in the morning...**” This shows first that David was not a slothful person who just liked lying around in bed. The Reformation leaders treated sloth as being a great enemy, and the industriousness of the Calvinists explains in part their prosperity. Why did early America prosper? Because they taught industriousness. Benjamin Franklin had so many proverbs that dealt with this: “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man health, wealthy, and wise.” “The early bird gets the worm.” “A stitch in time saves nine.” Etc. And Max Webber pointed out that this constant emphasis of the Scriptural principle – “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” – helped to produce the wildfire growth of capitalism in Calvinistic countries.

E. Value of time (v. 20a)

But this verse also shows David's value of time. He rose way before dawn. It is similar to the Proverbs 31 woman who rises way before dawn. Ephesians commands us to redeem the time. Leviticus gives many rules for time keeping, and the Bible is replete with principles of planning and time management.

Time was seen as a limited resource in the Bible, and the Biblical view of time hugely influenced the Reformers. They didn't just speak of working for yourself, and having others work for you. They also spoke of money working for you and time working for you. They understood compounded growth over time. But they also understood the critical role that time plays in worship, rest, and other activities. Wastefulness of time was considered a grave sin against God, but so was a refusal to spend time with family, church, and relaxation. Their point was that time didn't belong to you, and you couldn't spend time any way that you wanted. Time was a sacred trust from God that had to be managed carefully as a stewardship trust. Some people are careful not to waste money, but they squander their time. And the Reformers pointed out that squandering time was squandering money. If you have never engaged in time management, you have missed out on the Protestant Work Ethic. It is an absolutely essential ingredient.

This seeing of time as a limited resource entrusted by God to His people produced a radical rethinking of economics.

I am just barely introducing you to these concepts, OK? If you want to really develop the Protestant Work Ethic in your children, you will have to think through and apply these things. But it is going to take the grace of God to do so. These character issues flowed from David's being filled with the Spirit in the previous chapter. Well, let's move on...

F. Faithfulness/Virtue

1. Good steward (v. 20b)

Verses 20 and 22 illustrate a sixth value that Max Webber spoke about – faithfulness and/or virtue. The second phrase in verse 20 says that David, **“left the sheep with a keeper.”** He didn't leave his sheep to wander simply because he had been given a new responsibility. He had a concern for the sheep while he would be away, so he made sure that a hired hand knew what to do. This shows good stewardship.

2. Could follow orders (v. 20c)

The next phrase indicates that David was faithful to follow orders exactly as given. It says, **“and went as Jesse had commanded him.”**

3. Responsible with goods (v. 22)

And then verse 22 speaks of his responsibility with goods. He didn't misplace them while he is satisfying his curiosity about the battle. It says, **“And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers.”**

We are fast losing this kind of faithfulness and virtue that Max Webber, Tocqueville, and others have said was foundational to America's prospering. People nowadays many times contract to do a job, and then back out. People will promise to meet you at a given time, and show up late. People often do the minimum required on a job and don't go the extra mile. But if you want the blessing of the Lord upon all that you do, this is a character issue that must be put on.

I have given out a lot of copies of a booklet by Napoleon Hill, called *The Habit of Going the Extra Mile*. It shows illustration after illustration in businesses that this faithfulness will cause you to prosper. He starts his book by saying,

An important principle of success in all walks of life and in all occupations is a

willingness to *Go the Extra Mile*; which means the rendering of more and better service than that for which one is paid, and giving it in a *positive mental attitude*! Search wherever you will for a single sound argument against this principle, and you will not find it, nor will you find a single instance of enduring success which was not attained in part by its application!

If your children have not put on this attribute of the Protestant Work Ethic, start working on them right away. In fact, just to motivate them, I would encourage you to give them Napoleon Hill's booklet. I've got several copies with me.

G. Cultural engagement (vv. 13,15,17-22) – This is in contrast to:

The last feature of their view of work was that it must engage all of culture rather than withdrawing from culture. Work was not seen as a retreat from cultural engagement. It was part of cultural engagement. Now if you look at the back of your outlines, you will see Darrow Miller's three basic views of work – the theist's view of work is stewardship, taking all of earth for king Jesus. The secularist's view of work is purely an economic exchange to benefit me. The animist's view of work is a necessary burden. But really, it is a simplistic portrait, because not all Christians buy into the theist's view of work. They should, but they don't. So we need to discuss this idea of cultural engagement in a little bit more depth.

This whole chapter shows cultural engagement. The brothers of David engaged culture in verse 13 when they sought to overturn the threat of the Philistines. They weren't passive, even though they had a legal right to be so. In verse 15 David does his best to minister in two spheres of life. In verses 17-22 Jesse is not just helping out his sons; he is helping out the army. He was engaging culture. And even though it is only hinted at in these verses, the Reformers saw this principle of engagement as the necessary consequence of work being stewardship. And this too was a revolutionary restoration to old ideas that existed in the early church with men like Athanasius and Augustine.

1. Escape of some early fathers

Let me outline the main compromised approaches to culture that Christians have taken, and then contrast those with the Biblical position. And by the way, the Biblical position is the one that Max Webber said had the most profound impact on developing Capitalism. Many early church fathers were identical to the Reformed view, but there were some early fathers who escaped from culture altogether. They were so distressed over the sin and rebellion in the world that they went off into the desert and lived

in a cave by themselves. Others weren't quite as radical, but had the same spirit when they entered a monastery. It was escape. Their motivation was to protect themselves by getting away from the world. But when you leave the world to itself, you are failing to act as salt and light. You are denying that "this is my Father's world." You are leaving it to Satan, and it is a compromise of the Great Commission.

2. Synthesis of paganism and Christianity (Thomas Aquinas and Roman Catholicism)

But there was a second view that was developed by a brilliant man in the mid 1200's AD. His name was Thomas Aquinas. He so admired the Greek philosophers (especially Aristotle), that he adopted Aristotle's views on science, cosmology, economics, and many other things, and tried to synthesize those views with the Bible. He didn't want to let the Bible go, but he didn't want to let Aristotle go either. This syncretism produced a whole new religion that we now speak of as Roman Catholicism. There were many in the church who resisted Aquinas' compromise. Galileo later resisted this compromise. It's a mixture of pagan and Christian. The Reformation was just bringing things back to the way they were before Aquinas.

Now it's easy to recognize error back then, but many Evangelical and even Reformed Christians have done *exactly* the same thing today. They have adopted this approach of synthesis by mixing the wisdom of pagans with the wisdom of the Bible. For example, they adopt the pagan views of the creation of the world and evolution and put it together with some Biblical ideas on creation to produce a syncretistic religious idea such as the Day Age Theory. These same people mix pagan psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, pagan politics, and many other areas to produce what is called Neo-Evangelicalism. But it is miles and miles away from the true evangelicalism of the Reformation all the way up through the early 1800's. And this syncretistic approach will never be successful in fully establishing Christ's kingdom. Saul was in part guilty of syncretism in the kind of dominion that he took. He was trying to be the solution, but he was really part of the problem.

3. Two kingdom theory of Lutherans (sacred/secular)

The third approach to culture that you find in Christianity is the Lutheran two-kingdom theory. This approach applies the Bible to the church kingdom, but leaves the Bible out of the cultural kingdom. They were the ones who produced the sacred/secular dichotomy. The church is sacred and culture is secular. Practically, this means that huge areas of life were robbed

from Christ, and did not have the Biblical blueprints applied to them. They didn't engage culture, and consequently, hostile forces filled the vacuum of every area of culture that had been abandoned. It is no surprise to me that Nazism was able to take over Germany, including the Lutheran churches, because they did not have a Biblical philosophy that truly engaged culture. There was a vacuum there. Joel McDurmon gave a brilliant critique of this at the last American Vision Conference, and it is definitely worth listening to his lecture.

4. A ghetto counter-culture (Amish)

Moving quickly on, there is a fourth approach to culture that I like to term the ghetto counter-culture. This approach tends to conserve values that are hundreds of years old, but is more traditional than Scriptural. The Amish are a classic example of this approach, but there are a lot of people who are just milder versions of this. They think they are being spiritual by being old-fashioned, different, and isolated. They are uninfluenced by the world (or so they think), but neither do they influence others. They might still drive their buggies on the world's streets, but they have no impact, other than providing furniture.

5. Ignoring culture (fundamentalists)

The fifth approach is similar. It is to ignore culture. This is what fundamentalists have done. They have thought for the last 100 years that they would be raptured any day, so: "Why bother trying to change the world? Let's just save souls." This approach has been the biggest cause for the downfall of America. America has had the numbers of Christians needed to keep politics, business, blue laws, economics, and other things righteous. But they have not used their influence. They stopped influencing the movie industry. They might criticize certain aspects of culture from the pulpits, but they did almost nothing to change culture.

6. Adopting culture (liberals)

The sixth approach is to adopt the culture wholesale. This is what liberals have done. If culture is predominantly pro-abortion and pro-homosexual, they will be progressive in pushing for abortion rights and homosexual rights, little realizing that they are a complete mirror of paganism – but now within the church. This was the problem in Israel many, many times, when Israelites would profess faith in Jehovah, but use Baal worship with Jehovah's name. They would adopt Baal, or Ashtoreth, or whatever the current fad was, and try to call it Christianity. And the prophets

said, “No, you are pagans. You are not true believers.” Liberalism has always been a temptation for the church.

And those six compromising approaches to culture have kept the church from seeing the kind of societal blessings that Christian nation after Christian nation in the first 1000 years enjoyed. We have forgotten what it means to be a Christian nation. We have even doubted that the Great Commission’s command to disciple all nations is a fulfillable command. Never mind that God has promised in Isaiah 9, Isaiah 42, Psalm 72 and many other passages that one day all nations will serve Jesus and follow his laws. It just doesn’t seem feasible to them. So they take a less radical route, and lose the Lord’s power and blessings.

7. Transforming culture – cultural engagement (Reformed)

The approach of Calvin was to return to the majority view of the church in the first 10 centuries, and to engage with culture with a Biblical goal of changing culture. They were not satisfied with a peaceful coexistence with the Philistines. They wanted all under king Jesus.

Athanasius wanted all idols abolished, God’s laws exalted, and Christ reigning over all of life. And God blessed his efforts. Prior to Constantine, Christianity had invaded virtually every sphere of life. And Constantine saw the writing on the wall, and declared his empire a Christian empire. There is debate as to whether his conversion was real or just an attitude of “If you can’t beat them, join them.” But the point is, the goal of the early church was the Reformed goal of engaging and Christianizing culture. And in the early centuries they were vastly more successful than we have been in outlawing abortion, making spousal abuse illegal, and many other things that George Grant has brilliantly set forth in his book, *Third Time Around*. And that is a highly recommended book if you want to see the Protestant Work Ethic at work in the early church.

Let me sum up this whole first section and try to tie the loose ends together. The Reformers did not see work as a result of the curse, but as a spiritual gift of pre-fall man. And since we are post-fall, we need God’s grace to be restored to the Dominion Mandate. This will not come naturally. The Reformers saw work as service to God. Immediately prior to Calvin, a lot of Christians considered most professions as being secular, but Calvin insisted that when we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we are praying that God would work through farmers, distributors, millers, bakers,

and shop keepers to provide that bread. *God* was working through those professions, and every job, even the most menial, was considered service to God and a calling from God. They didn't see Christ's carpentry as any less a service to God than His preaching was. That was revolutionary. It stemmed the hemorrhaging of people into monasteries, into celibacy, and away from productivity. It made them realize that they can please God by doing business.

Dr. Roger B. Hill, said that the Reformation "viewed work as a calling and avoided placing greater spiritual dignity on one job than another, approved of working diligently to achieve maximum profits, required reinvestment of profits back into one's business, allowed a person to change from the craft or profession of his father, and associated success in one's work with the likelihood of being one of God's Elect." They were saying that if you are a Christian indwelt by God's Spirit, you should have this Protestant Work Ethic.

The historian Greg Singer said, "The influence of Calvin on economic theory and practice has been hardly less extensive than that which he exercised on the political order" (p. 45). It is a total misunderstanding of the doctrines of grace in the Reformation to think that such grace will make man passive. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul said, **"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me."** That's the Protestant work ethic. God's grace gives us reason to offer up everything that we do to His glory, and it gives us reason to be passionate in every line of work. God's grace makes us productive citizens and transforms societies. The Reformers knew nothing of the powerless grace that Roman Catholics had and that evangelicals preach today. In Colossians 1:28 Paul said, **"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."** This is why John Piper says, *"The power of God's grace in the heart of the humble believer who depends utterly on God produces incredible industry."* And he went on to say that *that's* Protestant work ethic.

II. Save

The second major pillar of the Protestant work ethic was thrift or savings for the future. You have a picture on your outlines of a little girl breaking into her piggy bank prematurely. And it is one of the features of immature individuals and immature societies when we have debt instead of savings. Savings cannot exist when people are present oriented. Savings

cannot exist when people have not learned deferred gratification. In the Bible, farmers were forced to be thrifty, and to defer their spending for a time, and to save up. Unfortunately, since FDR, that isn't true any more. The welfare state invaded the farms, and modern socialistic farming methods have taken away this Protestant work ethic to some degree. And there are many things that could be said about thrift, but I will only highlight three hints of it in this passage:

A. Thrift can build capital multi-generationally (v. 12)

The first hint is seen in verse 12 where the thrift of great grandpa Boaz, Grandpa Obed, and father Jesse, enabled this whole family to have the capital to influence Israel, be involved in other activities than farming, and to give. And this capital was built multi-generationally. 2Corinthians 12:14 perpetuates this principle by saying, **“For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.”** Paul was saying, “Don't spend your children's inheritance. Build multi-generationally.” Think of ways you can pass on a financial blessing to your children and grandchildren. Jesse blessed each of these children with a moderate middle class inheritance that enabled them not to be hand-to-mouth survivalists. They didn't reinvent the wheel every generation. No. They stood on their parents' shoulders.

B. Thrift can free up a family for expanded activities (vv. 13,14,15,17)

And I mentioned that this capital gave liberty for the men of the family to pursue other activities and expand their dominion. I love the prayer of Jabez when he asks God, **“Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory...”** Contrary to the many critiques that ignorant Reformed people have given, that is not a selfish prayer. And you ought to read Gary North's critique of the critiquers. God approved of that prayer. That prayer shows a passion for dominion. “Lord, give me more responsibilities. I want to have more influence for your glory.” That's a good prayer. But you can't pray that if you don't save. Without savings one emergency after another will keep you destitute and force you to spend all of your time on survival. You won't have time to have expanded borders, because you won't have the money to hire people to handle the expanded borders. God doesn't want us to stay in poverty. Sometimes it is unavoidable. But over the generations, our hope should be that more and more time would be freed up from survival concerns to other areas of taking dominion.

C. Savings can enable expansion (v. 20 “a keeper”)

The third thing that thrift enabled Reformers to do was to have disposable income that would enable them to hire others. This leveraged their money and their time to make their dominion more effective. There are other passages that speak of this in David’s life. But it is hinted at here in verse 20 when it says, “**So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took the things etc.**” The very fact that they had enough money to hire a keeper (which was a shepherd) freed David up to expand his dominion.

The growth is that you start off working for someone else, like his great grandma Ruth did. Through thrift, and avoiding spending anything that doesn’t need to be spent, and in her case through a good marriage, you can save up enough money to purchase fixed capital. This fixed capital enables you to work for yourself and leverage your labors. Through continued thrift you have enough money to have people work for you. This leverages your time and assets and enables more money to come in, which enables you to acquire more kinds of capital, including rental, which generates passive income. And over generations, you are able to invest and have your money work for you at the same time that others are working for you, and you are working for you. So you have multiple streams of income. And in time, you are freed up to engage in many more kinds of division of labor as trusted workers take over what only you originally could do. Thrift is a key to the Protestant Work Ethic, and it is a key to the kind of financial prosperity that the Bible says is possible.

III. Give

But if that is as far as you get, without going further, the blessing of the Lord will eventually be removed from you. We save to more effectively give. John Wesley, who embraced the Protestant Work Ethic, mourned the loss of this particular point in his generation. He said,

I fear that wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore, I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must of necessity produce industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches.²

Well, he was a little more pessimistic than the Reformers were, because he was a five point Arminian. Nevertheless, he does make a good

² Quoted by Darrow L Miller, in *Discipling the Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Nations* (Seattle: YWAM, 2001), p. 252.

point. Giving is a sign of our trust of God and submission to His law, and God blesses it.

A. Sacrifices of labor, time, and life (v. 13,15)

In this passage we see three kinds of giving. Point A - there were sacrifices of labor, time, and life in verses 13 and 15. David didn't have to go to court. Jesse could have refused. But Jesse saw it as an investment, and he gave up a valuable labor resource because he saw David's time as having great value for Christ's kingdom in the court. That is a kind of giving. It was sacrificing potential gain from David's labor in order to reap eternal gain. Some people have taken a great salary cut when they have gone into politics, and they were willing to give up this financial gain up because they were giving sacrificially to benefit their country.

Jesse also sacrificed in the same way with his sons when he let them go off to battle. During those 40 days they were a drain on his assets rather than expanding his assets. Of course, it did pay off because they were able to bring home a lot of plunder. But then, God blesses giving, doesn't He?

B. Civic contributions (v. 18)

So there were sacrifices of labor, time, and life. In verse 18 there were ten cheeses given to someone who wasn't in the family. And from what I understand of those big cheeses, this was a significant gift. You could liken it to various kinds of civic contributions that people make today – giving money for a political campaign.

C. Giving to your children (20:29)

And in chapter 20:29 we see the whole business being passed on to the children as dad retires. And we see the family spending money on food, drink, and good things during one of the year's many festivals. God does not want us depriving ourselves of all comforts like Scrooge. God's Word must define even deferred gratification. And God puts limits on such deferring of pleasure. He ordained 52 Sabbath days a year in which to feast and celebrate, plus at least one additional celebration every month, plus longer festivals. That is a form of giving to your family and to those who are poor through the second tithe. When you embrace the three tithes of Scripture, you don't have a miserly approach to capitalism. It's a joyful approach.

D. Other forms of charity and giving

Of course, Scripture speaks of many other forms of giving. And the point of Max Webber was that strategic giving kept Reformational

capitalism from even remotely resembling the dog-eat-dog world of Spencerian capitalism, which flowed out of Darwin's views on evolution. We give as stewards of God, so we must not give in a way that will hurt people and make them dependent. But neither may we withhold when God calls us to be generous.

Haggai 1 says that God isn't interested in blessing those who do not tithe and give beyond the tithe. The people in Haggai complained that they couldn't afford to tithe, and they certainly could afford to give beyond the tithe to build up the temple. And God said, "You have it all backwards. The reason you can't afford anything is because you have not been giving." And they say, "We don't have anything to give." And He answers: Yes...

"You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes." (v. 6).

And he immediately goes on to tell them the way out of this miserable cycle: *start giving. Start giving even out of your poverty.* You don't wait till you are millionaire before you start giving. Even the poor must tithe. So Haggai tells them to tithe and give beyond the tithe to finance the kingdom. Those who do not tithe, cannot expect God to long bless them. Now in this church even though we don't pass an offering plate, and we don't know who tithes and who doesn't, every member has covenanted with God to tithe and be generous. And many people have testified that God has tested them, and as they have continued tithing, God has opened up the windows of heaven in blessing. And that's what Malachi promises. He said

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, "In what way have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

So there are the curses for failing to follow the giving part of the Protestant Work Ethic. But then Malachi goes on to tell them to test His Word to see if He will not bless them when they start tithing. In fact, his promise sounds better than the average capitalist dream. It says,

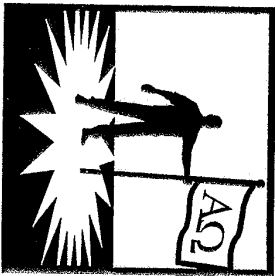
**Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the LORD of hosts,**

**“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you *such* blessing
That *there will not be room enough to receive it.***

Conclusion

And that passage is a good one to conclude on. God has given the Protestant Work Ethic because He wants to bless us and make us happy. His goal is not to make us miserable, like Mr. Scrooge. Mr. Scrooge had lost the heart of what the Protestant Work Ethic was all about. The Protestant Work Ethic was doing all that we could to glorify God and enjoy Him. We cannot leave off the enjoying Him. And God guarantees that if we glorify Him with working as hard as we can, and saving all that we can, and giving all that we can, He will cause us to enter more and more into the enjoyment of His good things. And this is my prayer for you – that you would prosper and enjoy life because you have embraced the Protestant Reformation’s version of the Work Ethic that transformed Europe and laid the foundations for America. May you be so blessed. Amen.

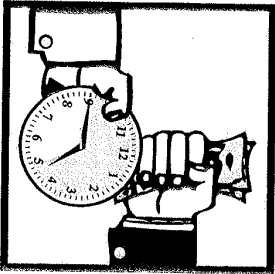
WORK



Theism's view

Figure 12.3

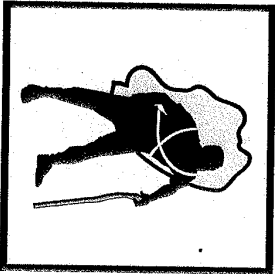
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Secularism's view

Figure 12.4

WORK



Animism's view

Figure 12.5

Economic Premises

	Animism	Theism	Secularism
Economic System	Barter	Capitalism	Consumerism
Ultimate Reality	Spiritual	Personal	Physical
Man	Ghost	Mind	Mouth
Nature	Limited Good	Positive Sum	Zero Sum
Time Frame	Past	Future	Present
History	Life is on a wheel	History is going somewhere	Time is running out
Work	To survive	To glorify God	To consume
Ethics	Amoral	Moral absolutes	Immoral
Knowledge	Ignorance is a virtue	Truth is absolute	Relativism

Figure 12.2

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The Protestant Work Ethic

1Samuel 17:12-22

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-31-2010

Introduction

- Without the Protestant Reformation's doctrines, the Protestant Work Ethic (and beneficial Capitalism) will not prosper.
- John Wesley sought to summarize the Protestant Work Ethic in three words: "**Work** as hard as you can; **save** as much as you can; **give** as much as you can!" (John Wesley)

I. Work

- A. The value of a family business (v. 12,13,15,20)
- B. Division of labor - The dignity of all lawful vocations
 1. The privilege of changing jobs (v. 15)
 2. Civic duty (v. 13, 15a)
 3. Shepherding (v. 15b)
 4. Delivery (vv. 16-17)
- C. Yet the priority of the family
 1. Only three sons could fight at a time (vv. 13-14; see 2Sam 31:6; also Deut 20:5-8)
 2. While serving, David helped out his father (v. 15)
- D. Value of industriousness (v. 20a)
- E. Value of time (v. 20a)
- F. Faithfulness/Virtue
 1. Good steward (v. 20b)
 2. Could follow orders (v. 20c)
 3. Responsible with goods (v. 22)
- G. Cultural engagement (vv. 13,15,17-22) – This is in contrast to:
 1. Escape of some early fathers
 2. Synthesis of paganism and Christianity (Thomas Aquinas and Roman Catholicism)
 3. Two kingdom theory of Lutherans (sacred/secular)
 4. A ghetto counter-culture (Amish)
 5. Ignoring culture (fundamentalists)
 6. Adopting culture (liberals)
 7. Transforming culture – cultural engagement (Reformed)



II. Save

- A. Thrift can build capital multi-generationally (v. 12)
- B. Thrift can free up a family for expanded activities (vv. 13,14,15,17)
- C. Savings can enable expansion (v. 20 "a keeper")

III. Give

- A. Sacrifices of labor, time, and life (v. 13,15)
- B. Civic contributions (v. 18)
- C. Giving to your children (20:29)
- D. Other forms of charity and giving

Conclusion

