

Faith. Vocation. Culture.
The Washington Institute

Vocation Is Mission:
FALL-The Fall Happens
October 19, 2011
Autumn Series
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The following is transcribed from Part 2 of the Fall "Vocation Is Mission" lecture series delivered in the Historic Church of The Falls Church on Wednesday, October 19, 2011

Good evening everybody. Thank you so much for coming tonight. Those of you for whom this is your first time joining us, I am so glad you are here, and for your benefit, we are going to recap just a little bit about what we talked about last time, and hopefully bring those ideas back to the minds of those of us that were here.

VOCATION IS MISSION

At The Washington Institute, we are fond of saying that vocation is integral not incidental to the mission of God in the world. Now, this is no small assertion, and we believe that our work in the world, rightly understood and practiced, is as important to God's work in the world as pastoring, as missionary work, as evangelism, as so called "full-time Christian ministry." So if you are here and are not primarily involved in any of those things for your livelihood, what we are saying is, your work matters as much as those things.

The question is, why do we believe this? Is it just a nice idea to make people feel good about what they do? Or are there better foundations than that? Why do we assert so boldly that your work matters to God, and most importantly, does the bible teach this? For me, this has been something of a bit of a thought exercise for The Washington Institute, that is, can we say this with integrity that vocation is integral not incidental to the mission of God in the world? Let's make sure there is a clear scriptural foundation for this challenging assertion—this beautiful explanation we are exploring in this series. Let's make sure there is a biblical and theological justification for the assertion that vocation is mission, that if you are like Glen, working at National Geographic, that you are not subject to a secondary calling, or if you are like Kwang who works at the World Bank, that you have not missed God's better call for your life. Have any of you ever wondered that about your work? Many of us have, and we want to liberate all of us from that misconception.

So we are looking at what the bible has to say about our work and about the mission of God through the lens of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation—what I heard characterized today as the fourfold gospel. Interesting. Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. Last time we opened up with Creation, and we saw the beauty of the way God made things and the way God designed things and specifically how that relates to our work, but more broadly how it relates to all things.

THE BEAUTY OF CREATION

Last time in his introduction, Steve Garber opened up with a little band recommendation. He talked about Mumford and Sons, which I went out and bought the next day, and they are as good as he said people say they are. They're wonderful. I encourage you to listen to them loud. Not to be outdone, I have decided to bring my own musical recommendation, and I offer to you a band that you may have heard of before called Gungor. Gungor is a very, very interesting band. It's a collective. It is actually led by a husband and a wife who sing together, and their most recent album called *Beautiful Things* is their attempt to try to get at in their way this narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation on one album. So let's listen to their take on creation:

Gungor, "Crag and Clay" from *Ghosts Upon the Earth*

Standing up from crags and clay
The peaks of earth
In full display
They break the lines
That break the sky
That's full of life
Full of life

The chaos of creation's dance
A tapestry, a symphony
Of life himself
Of love herself
It's written in our very skin

All praises to the one who made it all
Who made it all
All praises to the one who made it all
And finds it beautiful

Soil is spilling life to life
Stars are born
To fill the night
The ocean's score
The majesty
Of sculpted shore
Mystery

All praises to the one who made it all, Who made it all
All praises to the one who made it all, And finds it beautiful

Fearfully and wonderfully and beautifully made

Fearfully made comes right out of Psalm 139 doesn't it? Who is fearfully and wonderfully made? The song gets it right. God creates this gorgeous thing called Earth, but where it ends and what is most beautiful is this thing called a human being that God makes. What God did at Creation was beautiful—nature and us. And as we talked about last time, He did it with a purpose. So I have provided for you the notes from last time we were together. I'm just going to rip through this really quickly just to remind us of the glory and the grandeur of what God did before we explore what happened.

GOD'S PURPOSES IN CREATION

So God created with a purpose. God created the earth to reveal His character and to create a place where His character could be revealed. Then God created people to reveal God's self, to steward His creation, and to be in relationship with Him. That is why we are here: to reveal God, to take care of

what He made and gave us, and to be in relationship with Him. So the purpose of Creation first and foremost is the revelation of God through creation. Get that from Romans 1, get that from Genesis 1.

Secondly, the purpose of Creation is the revelation of God through direct, unmediated relationship with people. This is God walking in the cool of the day in the garden with Adam. This is where it starts, this is where it will end, and this is what He created for, so that we could have a direct, unmediated relationship with him—that we could see God as clearly as you see me.

And then, the third way that Creation reveals God is through human beings. We get this out of Genesis 1. This image of God in us manifests itself in a number of ways including the fact that we have a spirit, we have certain capacities that make us very different from other created living things such as reason and spirituality, conscience, self awareness, and particularly the will. That is, we can choose; we are given the dignity of choice. The image of God manifests itself in us in marriage and in child bearing, and I would also add that the image of God manifests itself in a single person fully alive. The image of God manifests itself through our relationships with one another, and for the purposes of this series, we want to underscore and highlight that the image of God manifests itself in us in our divine function, that is, what we are called to do. God works, and therefore we work.

So, as we saw, the call and the opportunity and the privilege of work are things that are given to us before the fall of man. Genesis 2:15, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it." Work is pre-Fall. So, why? To what end, work? Well, to steward creation in the direction of the whole world becoming a place of revelation of God and the enjoyment of the peace and the fullness and the love of God. In other words, we work so that the whole world might be the context of the lived, experiential reality of the *shalom* of Yahweh. The peace of God.

CREATION AS CULTIVATION

I have been reading through a wonderful book that I also commend to you. It is by John Stott, called *Through the Bible: Through the Year*. Maybe you have seen it. In this book Stott takes a short reflection every day and marches through the whole bible to try to get a sense of the narrative sweep of the scripture—and it's great. I have really appreciated it. He says this:

"I like the story of the cockney gardener who was showing a clergyman"

—why is that the clergy men are always the buffoons in these stories? I'm not sure about that. It is not without cause I am sure, but still! So:

"The cockney gardener was showing a clergyman around his magnificent, herbaceous borders, which were in full bloom. The clergyman broke into the praise of God, until the gardener was so fed up because he was receiving no credit. 'Well you should have seen this here garden when God had it to himself!' He complained."

Interesting. His theology was entirely correct. Without the human worker, the garden would be a wilderness. We need then to make an important distinction between nature and culture. Nature is what God gives us. Culture is what we make of it—agriculture, horticulture, etc. Nature is raw materials; culture is commodities prepared for the market. Nature is divine creation; culture is human cultivation. God invites us to share in His work. Indeed, our work becomes a privilege when we see it all

as collaboration with God. *Co-labor*-ation with God, right? Nature is what God gives us. Culture is what we make of it. Without the human worker, the garden would have been a wilderness.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to go to Manhattan. It had been years since I had been up there, and I was perfectly content to be one of those people who just walk with my head up in the sky, just saying "Holy smokes! Man, those are really tall, and there are lots of them!" I was shameless in my wonderment and my sense of awe. So, the meeting in which I was taking part was in this wonderful conference room on the 52nd floor of my hotel, and they had this gorgeous view of the city. I started out the conference with Psalm 8, which is where we started out in the previous lecture. I look at the stars and I say, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" I see the heavens and all the works of Your fingers. O, what is man that you even think about him? And I said, "Friends, let's look at this city, and the effect is the same. O, 'what is man that you are mindful of him?' Look at what man has done by building Manhattan. What dignity we have been given that God has given us not only the opportunity but even the call, and even the privilege, of being able to build places where people can live." So, Psalm 8 through the lens of Manhattan.

Bono, the poet who sings the song, "The Hands That Built America," sings these lines:

Oh my love
It's a long way we've come
From the freckled hills
To the steel and glass canyons

From the stony fields
To hanging steel from skies
From diggin in our pockets
For a reason not to say good bye.

He is talking about the Irish immigrants coming over from Ireland to make New York into what it is. Without mankind, there would be no Manhattan.

THE FALL HAPPENS

Yet, for the wonder of Manhattan, I flew into LaGuardia. There is Queens, and I don't know enough about Queens to be able to say with as much accuracy or inaccuracy as there might be, but Queens is different from Manhattan, isn't it? There are the projects, and then of course, there is all of the idolatry that Manhattan can be, and is. Even our best efforts at civilizing the world to make it a place of God's *shalom* are fallen. Indeed, for all of the glory of Genesis 1 and 2, it is followed by Genesis 3, isn't it? The Fall happens. The Fall happens.

It is the job of a marketer to find out what people want and exploit it even if they do not even know what they want, isn't it? Well, let's watch this commercial by Levi's and consider what it has to say about the nature of our work:

(Transcription of Levi's "Go Forth To Work" commercial)

We were taught how the pioneers went into the West. They opened their eyes and made up what things could be. A long time ago, things got broken here. People got sad and left. Maybe the world breaks on purpose...so we can have work to do. People think there aren't frontiers anymore. They can't see how frontiers are all around us.

What is Levi's tapping into? This is an ad campaign called the "Go Forth" campaign. It started in 2009. It is still running in 2011. It has been very, very effective for them. Basically this is what they did. Levi's partnered with Braddock, Pennsylvania, an old abandoned steel town, and they basically started pumping money into their economy and getting people back to work to rebuild the town, which was fallen because when the industry left, everybody left. As the mayor said, "90% of our town is in a landfill." These are the taglines from the Levi's Go Forth campaign. "Go forth to work." "There is work to be done, go forth." "We are all workers." And they are telling you these things to sell you some jeans. But are they on to something? The girl in the commercial says that people used to think you had to go west to find the frontier, but she walks out and sees this blighted urban arena, and she says, "The frontiers are all around us." She says, "Maybe things got broken so we would have work to do." Interesting! I don't know who the theologians are who are working for their marketing people. Quite something, isn't it? But why I show this commercial is to say, it starts out with this beautiful morning, doesn't it? Dawn, chill of the morning, cup of coffee, and then all of a sudden you start getting screen shots of this blighted city. Something happened. And what they are trying to tap into is the fact that people want good work to do. They want to do something meaningful. They want to be involved in pushing back against the brokenness. Good work is an adventure. And there is lots of it. And it is hard. And we all experience it that way.

That work is hard, that work is as hard as it is, is a result of the Fall. Let me say that again, that work is as hard as it is, is a result of the Fall. If you find your work difficult, you are up against forces that are bigger than your employer, or bigger than your office dynamics. Creation happened and the Fall happened. And we disobeyed.

THE FALLOUT

Ok, we disobeyed, I get that. The question is why? Why did we disobey? When my kids disobey, which is a not an infrequent occurrence—you know, sometimes I just want simple behavior management, as in "Would you just listen to what I told you and please do it?" Other times, what they do is so opposite of what I asked that I am actually less interested in the fact that they disobeyed, and instead I want to know what in the world was going on in their brains, "Why did you just do that?" and so I want to hear what led their thought processes to why they made that decision which they knew was wrong. Sometimes I am just trying to understand what is going on inside them.

We know that we disobeyed; let's explore the "Why." Here they are:

First, we wanted to be like God—on our terms. We abused our freedom. We took what God gave us and we used it for ourselves. Instead of "stewards of," we became "consumers of." Instead of Creation being about God, we made it about us. Instead of work becoming worship, work became hard. And all that was made good was twisted.

C.S. Lewis makes the point that Satan cannot create anything, he can only pervert, he can only twist. Sex is the clearest example of this—something that is given to us that is so inherently beautiful at every level, yet becomes so twisted that it actually becomes a tool of destruction for many, many, many people in a large variety of ways. Creation itself, beautiful, subjected to decay. We get estranged from God.

But work is also affected. Let me say that again, work is also affected. Yet still, like in everything else, the divine design holds out promise. The divine design is deeper than what happened because of the Fall. So let's look at that. Let's open our bibles up to Genesis 3. We want to look at the text. Remember, we want to explore the scriptures in this series. So, this story of the fall of man on the heels of the creation of man is the first flourish of a very dark pattern in the scripture and a very dark pattern in our lives. Here is the consistent pattern of the bible: revelation, then reprisal. Revelation then reprisal. God's action, and then the reaction of evil. When God does something, Satan is right there to do something back.

One of the clearest examples of this is when Jesus is born. It is the best thing that has happened in the history of the world, and right on the heels of it there is the slaughter of the innocents, only a couple of verses apart. Glory and horror. Beauty and perversion. Peace and violence. Here we have Creation and Fall. Revelation of God and then reprisal of the evil one—something that wants to get in the way of that revelation.

THREE TEMPTATIONS, THEIRS AND OURS

So, Satan reacts to God's action of creation, and humankind usurps God's plan. "Usurp" means to take without authority as one's right. You grab it because you think it is yours even though it is not yours to take. Satan works with humans to tempt us into usurping God's authority—taking what was not ours and claiming it for our own. So, we have the text, Genesis 3:1-7. The serpent comes to Eve and he tempts her in three ways, and these are three temptations that come right at us as well.

The first one is in verses 1 and 4. Here is Eve's first temptation, that God's Word is not true. "God's word is not true." This is the temptation that comes to us all. Satan says to her, "Did God really say?" Friends, you recognize this in our own culture, right? Again, let's just highlight issues of sexuality. Did God really say that you ought not to have sex before you are married? Did He really say that? Are there ways we can understand that a little bit differently? Surely He couldn't have said that. We could easily apply this temptation in a lot of different ways. So that is the first temptation, that God's Word is not true.

The second one, verse 5, and this one is very seductive because it is so close to being true. "You will be like God." Satan says, "Eat the fruit; you will be like God." This is indeed a temptation. The problem with this is that Satan is tempting Eve in saying "You will be like God," but it is not going to be on God's terms, in which case Eve will never be like God. That is the part Satan doesn't fill her in on.

The third temptation is actually woven throughout all of them. The temptation in the garden is to take what God has given us and to use it for ourselves. We take what is freely given to us and use it for ourselves, for our own purposes with no regard to God. This is the starting point of the book by Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, that God gives everything to human beings in the garden, He gives us everything to enjoy ourselves and to offer up to God with thanksgiving. Schmemmann

says, "We are all called to be priests, to take what is given to us, consecrate it, and offer it up to the Lord, and then use it in accordance with God's designs. All of us are the priests. But, what we did instead, was we took what God had offered, and grasped it for ourselves in an attempt to take God's place." Now you tell me that doesn't happen a lot, where we take what God has given us and we actually try to control our circumstances with it. Or we look to it for our sense of security. Or we use it to our own self-centered benefit. It's all the same thing, taking what God has given us and instead of thanking Him for it by offering it back to Him, we use it for ourselves.

These are the three temptations that came to Eve. She ate the fruit—and let's just be biblically accurate here, she did not eat the apple; she ate the fruit. Apples get a bad name here. As do snakes by the way. And Adam ate the fruit too. Humankind was designed to—here we go back to the purposes of Creation—humankind was designed to be like God in order to glorify God by stewarding God's world in communion with Him. Let me say that again. We were designed to be like God, to glorify God, to reveal Him, by stewarding God's creation in communion with Him...for the good of everybody. For the good of everything. That was the goal. But that is not what happened. The sin in the garden was the attempt to become like God in order to compete with God and to use God's world for our own agenda. You hear the contrast? I am going to say that part again. The sin in the garden was our attempt to become like God in order to compete with God, to usurp God's place, and use God's world for our own sake. That is the Fall. And the result affected everything that had been created.

A FALLEN CREATION

So let's revisit the three key purposes of Creation, the way that God reveals Himself, and consider how the Fall affects these. The Fall affects creation. Romans 8:19-21 describes creation as being subjected to frustration, not by its own choice. Creation didn't fall. We did. "But by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." In other words, the gospel is not just for humans, the gospel is for creation as well? That is what Romans 8 says, but notice how it is described. Creation itself is affected by the Fall by being subjected to frustration, and also by being in bondage to decay that was akin to slavery. That is how the Fall affects creation. There are many ways we could illustrate this. And very interestingly especially we see in the prophets in the Old Testament that their visions of the way things ought to be always include harmonious relationships not only between mankind and nature, but also between nature and itself. The lion will lay down with the lamb. They imagine a different way that nature would be.

It reminds me of what happened in Zanesville, Ohio last night; it has been on the news today. This private zoo keeper opened all the cages holding his animals, his exotic animals, 50 of them, and then he tragically killed himself and let the animals go, except that the animals were lions, bears, panthers, wolves, monkeys. So starting late last night, the police went out hunting, and this morning, scattered around Zanesville, Ohio are 50 carcasses of some of the world's most amazing creatures. That is creation broken! On so many levels, so many levels, that is not the way it was designed to be.

So, the Fall affected God's direct relationship with humans. We know this. We are estranged from God. We are separated from God. There is the famous chasm for which we need *the cross* to be able to cross. Human beings, who we are and our very nature, are also radically affected by the Fall. Genesis 3, death enters. It was not part of the original design. Our capacities, particularly our will, are twisted, not functioning the way that they should. Our capacities are limited and our internal compasses are off.

Marriage is affected by the Fall. The man all of a sudden is ruling over the woman as opposed to working with the woman. Childbearing—more pain with child bearing. Relationships with one another are affected. More division, more violence. And then our divine function to work, to image God by working, is also radically affected by the Fall. The result of these effects is pain and death.

The serpent is cursed, the man and the woman are judged, and their judgment consists of two things particularly. The first is multiplied pain. Both the man and the woman get multiplied pain as part of the effect of the Fall. To the woman, God says in Genesis 3:16, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.” That is interesting. In other words, even in a pre-Fall condition there was pain of some sort in childbearing. This is a huge rabbit trail I am not going to go down except to pose the question, what could be good about pain in childbearing? I don't know. Something. Maybe if you have had a baby you could answer that. I should have my wife talk about that one. “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.” Tara, my wife, has had four babies. All have been natural. It is painful. I am glad I can attest by observation and not by other ways. The judgment is multiplied pain. The judgment is also death. Genesis 3:19 and 22, death enters in. God says, “I am not going to let you live forever in this state.” Both of these effects of the Fall are obvious. They are widespread, and they occur every moment of every day since the Fall.

This fundamental disobedience sets in motion the reign of evil in the world. You can read it in Romans 1. Basically we have been given over to what we have chosen, to be like God on our own terms. And the world, the way that it looks now, is the result, except for much grace that God has given us along the way. More on that next time. So the rest of Genesis 3-11 is what could be called the avalanche of evil where you just see evil compounding itself. Cain kills his brother. Lamech, one of Cain's descendents, says, “I am worse than Cain. You know, Cain killed his brother. I'm going to kill seven of my brothers.” By the time Genesis 6 rolls around, God looks at humanity and says, “I am sorry that I created them.” After the entrance of sin into the world, the author piles story upon story to show the radical seriousness of sin by the sheer volume of the evidence. Now, the purposes of God limp forward. Those original reasons that God created everything are now limping forward. They have not ceased, but now they are walking with a severe limp.

John Stott again:

“Through the whole story of Genesis 4 to 11, the social situation steadily deteriorates. We see outbreaks of anger, jealousy, arrogance, violence, resentment, revenge, fear, and self-pity culminating in God's judgments in the flood and in the tower of Babel. But the beauty of these chapters as a whole is that alongside the horrors of human sin, human culture begins to flourish: farming and building and technology and music. So God's purposes continue marching forward, but now they are marching with a limp.”

“How long must we wait?” they say, and Romans 8 says the whole creation is waiting. 8:19, the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. So we have considered how the Fall affects everything. How does the Fall affect work though? How does it affect this thing that was given to us to demonstrate our divine function and how we image God? Genesis 3 does not change the mandate of Genesis 2:15; it just makes it harder. Tom Nelson's, whose book *Work Matters* is coming out in a few weeks, puts it very simply, “the bible clearly tells us that while work is not a result of the curse, work itself was profoundly impacted by the curse.”

So let's look at what God said to Adam, verse 17 of Genesis 3. Here is the curse:

“Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain,”—there’s Adam's pain—“in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

So we started with this beautiful vision of work given to us by God and yet it gets cursed, it gets twisted. It does not start bad, but it becomes a lot harder. Tom Nelson's word for this is “distortion.” Something that is good that becomes malformed. Well let's look at the eight ways that I've come up with of how our work becomes malformed, how the work gets twisted. In other words, the Fall *happened*, but that is past tense, and also the Fall *happens*, present tense. I bet each one of you can identify with some of these things on this list about how your work is affected by the Fall.

THE FALL AFFECTS OUR WORK

First, it got harder. How many of you feel like you ever have to work hard? Yeah, we all do. That is part of what we received as our inheritance. We see that in every field, work has its aspects of being very, very, very difficult. Some people think it would be cool to be the President of the United States. But there is a reason why they all start out with one shade of hair and end up four years later with another shade of hair, right? I am amazed at how hard some of the folks work where I live like the farmers. I am amazed at how hard construction workers work. When I drive home tonight, I will drive on I-66, and there will be guys out there working. Work got harder. And each of you has ways in which work gets hard too.

Second, work all of a sudden comes with a sense, not of dignity, but rather of futility. “Does what I am doing even matter at all?” we ask. Some people feel this very, very keenly. Certainly Solomon did even after he had built up his empire and had all of his wealth. He says in Ecclesiastes 2:18 and following:

“I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it.”

In other words, he is saying, “I worked hard and I am going to die and some guy is going to get it, and I don't know if he is going to be worthy of it or not.”

“What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation.”

It's a puzzle. It's confusing.

“Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.”

And it goes on. He says, you might as well eat and drink and find enjoyment in your work. Now there is a lot to say about Ecclesiastes, but here we have a great example of someone who is saying, “You know,

I work really hard and I'm not sure what it's worth. And you know, even if it is worth something, I'm going to die and leave it to somebody whom I don't know what they are going to do with it. Is it worth anything? What's the point?"

There is a wonderful sermon we came across at The Washington Institute about this (in your notes) from a young pastor named Matthew Mason. It describes this a little bit about the various ways we can feel like our work is futile. Or we wonder, is it worth anything?

The third way that work is affected by the Fall is that our work competes as a source of our identity. Here in Washington, D.C., can I get an amen? What question do you ask first at a cocktail party? "What do you do?" I am telling you the truth, I have lived in the Shenandoah Valley now for two years, and not one person has asked me what I do. It is annoying because I'm not going to go up to them and say, "Well you know, I'm actually a pastor, can I help you?" There is a place for that, but it is very, very interesting that they do not care *what I do*. They care *who I am*. "Are you a good dad?" "Are you nice to me?" "You're not from around here, I know that. What kind of person are you?" The question of our town, Washington, D.C. is "What do you do?" I'm a lawyer. I'm a doctor. I'm a pastor. I'm a teacher. I work for the federal government. But what happens when that changes? What happens if you are not able to be in your field anymore, or if you get demoted, what happens? Lost identity. People get lost when they leave Washington and lose their sense of importance—they get lost. So, work becomes twisted when it becomes a source of our identity, when we identify who we are by what we do for a job or what we describe as our vocation.

Fourth, work becomes twisted in the Fall by becoming a source of misplaced pride. This was the problem with the Tower of Babel. It was not bad that they were building a city. What was bad about it was the rationale for building a city. Their reason was to make a name for themselves. The problem was not mere building. That is what they were designed to do. It was the purposes for which they were building. It is the wonderful illustration of people who are climbing the ladder only to get to the top and realize they are on the wrong wall. When our work is a source of our pride, that is exactly what is happening. We get to the top of it and realize, "Oh my gosh, I'm on the wrong wall."

Fifth, another of the ways that work is affected by the fall is workaholism. This is from Tom Nelson from *Work Matters*:

"One of the ways we make work an idol is workaholism. Workaholism is rampant in our day and often points to a deeper issue of idolatry in our lives. In this common form of idolatry, our identity becomes centered in and our entire life revolves around what we do. We worship our work and live our lives as if God does not exist. Work idolatry can be driven by our pursuit of the American Dream, of material comforts, of financial security, or of our attempts to prop up a certain image of success about ourselves. Work idolatry is often concealed in the language of organizational loyalty and commitment and is regularly legitimized in a competitive work environment as the required pathway to promotion and advancement."

True here? True in the legal field? I think so.

"Workaholism can also be driven by greed, and rebellion against God. Regardless of the form it takes, like a black hole from which light cannot penetrate or escape, excessive devotion to work inevitably crowds out both our relationship with God and with others."

Workaholism, a way that work is affected by the Fall. Right there we insert one of the commandments, "Remember the Sabbath." We will come to that a little bit later.

Sixth, another way that work is affected by the Fall counter intuitively is when we do not work enough. Not working enough. Sloth, to use a nice biblical word. Or to use the word from Proverbs, "oh ye sluggard!" Remember the sluggards of the book of Proverbs? I don't exactly know what a sluggard is—I should research that. I don't think they had the English word for "slug" back then. Maybe we got it from that—I don't know. Proverbs 24:30 and following says, "I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns." Here are allusions to the thistles and the thorns of the Fall. "And the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I saw and considered it; I looked and I received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man." Proverbs 21:25, "The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor." Interesting. One of the ways that work is affected by the Fall is when we are lazy.

Seventh, another way that work is affected by the Fall is when work is seen merely as a means to an end. "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go." When we think that the only reason why I am working is to pay my bills, that is a perversion of work. It is *not* the only reason why we go to work. Or take the saying, "Everybody's working for the weekend." Really? Is that the only reason why we are working, so that we don't have to work anymore? Or, "TGIF—thank God it's Friday!" This is the perversion of work where work is seen merely as a means to an end, as a means to pay my bill or a means to pay my party bill.

Eighth, the last way that work is affected by the Fall, for me, is the existence of unemployment and unjust labor. Unemployment at 9% in the United States, 17% in Greece. Higher in other countries. The psychological effect of this is profoundly destructive. You have friends who are unemployed, and maybe you are that person who is struggling to know who you are based on the fact that you are not working right now. We feel like something is wrong when we are not clear about our vocation. And this is a reality around the world. But also a reality around the world, the other way labor is twisted, is the existence of bonded labor or unfair wages. The living wage in our own country is a perversion of what it ought to be. In our country the living wage is probably decent compared to other countries, but still you can't do it. Single mom cannot do it. Slavery is a perversion of work affected by the Fall as well as child labor. UNICEF says that worldwide, approximately 158 million children between 5 and 18—that is one in every six children in that age group around the world—are engaged in child labor, many of them simply to support their families whose parents cannot provide enough for the family. Something is wrong with that. It is a perversion of labor, a perversion of work.

FIGHTING THE FALL

But just because there are these twistings of the experience of our work does not mean that work is bad. Work also needs to be redeemed and restored to its original purpose. We need to understand the purposes of our work and our dignity as beings who work because we are made in the image of One who works. We need to understand this afresh. If we were created to create, if God the worker created us as workers, Jesus' coming means that we now get to redeem the possibility of work. More on that next month about how Jesus' coming affects work and vocation. But I will say even now, if last time we talked about the fact that we work because God is a worker, we create because God is a creator, now because of the Fall we have something else that is deep in our essence that is part of who we are and

what we get to do. It's that quote from the little girl on the Levi's ad. "Maybe things were broken so that we would have work to do." If creation is part of our fundamental calling, if work is part of our fundamental calling, now added to this because of the Fall, is Redemption. Not only are we called to live into the purposes for work, we are now also called to be a part of God's redemptive work through our work because of the Fall.

But first, what to do, what to do?

First, we must resist the temptations of the garden. And we resist these temptations of the garden by saying to God, "You are God and I am not. You are God and I am not." We resist these temptations by trusting God's Word. And then also we resist these temptations by using what God has given us to bless Him, to be the steward, to be the priest, to be God-like stewards, not simply self-centered consumers.

The second thing we can do is we can celebrate the work that we get to do. We don't curse it because it has been cursed. Does that make sense? We do not have to curse our work simply because our work has been cursed.

Third, what do we do when it feels cursed? What do we do when we want to curse? Well, we let the challenge of our work lead to our *Maranatha*. This is huge. When our work is hard, we pray "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." This is not the way it was designed to be. We turn this sense of frustration and futility into prayer and defeat Satan who not only helped the Fall happen, but who is involved in the Fall still happening, including in the ways our work is hard. We defeat him with prayer looking forward in expectation to the promise of Christ that He will come back and it will not be like this all the time.

Fourth thing to do: we work hard. We do our work with as much as we can, no sloth. And we do it because we know it is not about our agendas, it is about responsiveness to what God has invited us to do.

Fifth thing, remember the Sabbath. It is the quickest antidote to workaholism.

The sixth and last thing for tonight, beware of placing our identities in what we do in our work. We are not what we do. We are not what we do! We are the beloved of God who get to participate in work and His work. That is who we are. That is who we are. Our jobs might change, our vocations will likely change, but that does not change. We are the beloved of God. Amen!