



Dear friends and members of SWD:

Recently I picked up a book by Gene Vieth entitled *God at Work: Your Christian vocation in All of Life*. Vocation is an interesting way of looking at our lives and what we do. We have Vocational Schools where people learn a particular trade. But vocation is more than just a job, it is a calling. It is a course of action. Our vocation, our calling, as God's people is to

serve our God. St. Paul tells the Romans, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." If what God wants for us there is not plain enough, Paul says this to the Ephesian Christians: it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." That's where we usually stop with that passage. But Paul's pen continues. He writes, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." That is to say, God created us; God bought us back from sin, God called us to be His own so that might "do good works"...so that we might do...so that we might work.

Contrary to what our sinful nature likes to tell us work is not really a four-letter word. Work was actually part of the world before sin ruined the world. Immediately after God creates Adam and Eve, he places them in the Garden of Eden. Moses writes this about that Garden: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Adam and Eve enjoyed it; but when sin enters the world all of that changes. Listen to the curse that God pronounces on the world and all mankind. He says to Adam: "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat of it, Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground." At that moment work became tedious and boring, unfulfilling and unrewarding. On that day work became a toilsome and backbreaking.

Sin makes work into a four-letter word. But it is God's grace, his love and forgiveness in the person of our Lord Jesus, who gives us a new and difference perspective on work and on all that we do. You see, work is more than punching a clock or checking in. Work is everything that we do at home and on the job. That's important because so much of who we are is wrapped up in what we do. We ask our kids, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" And what are we when we grow up? I am a spouse. I am a parent. I am a citizen. I am a pastor, a district president. We are office workers and teachers. We are students. We are factory workers or self-employed. We are salesmen or soldiers. We are professionals or administrators. We are healthcare workers. We are husbands and wives. We are parents and children. We are housewives. Each is part of what we have been called to be as a child of God.

That bears repeating: *Each of those vocations is part of what we have been called to be as a child of God.* You see, in our workaday world we are preoccupied with so many details and distractions. How do we balance family life and work responsibilities? How can we have a good family and raise good children? We are caught up in economic concerns. We are affected by politics and policies. How can we keep all the balls in the air at the same? Paul's answer is the best answer that can be given. He says, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."

Every day in all of our vocations we have the opportunity to serve our God in all that we do. It's a unique way of looking at the most tedious and boring aspects of living and working in this world. You see, Jesus didn't just die so that we might have forgiveness. He died and rose again so that forgiveness might touch every aspect of our lives. Forgiveness means that God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. Forgiveness means that we can now look at everything in life from the perspective of God's relationship with us. That's Paul's perspective when he writes to the Colossian believers, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

May our gracious Lord bless you in your vocations!

Rev Dr John C Wille

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