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CHRISTIAN AMBITION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

The world is facing a grave threat in the fast spreading COVID19 virus. It is affecting the local and international economy in an unprecedented manner. The Nasdaq fell by 7.3%, Dow Jones Industrial Average by 7.6 % and Nikkei index by more than 5% last week. Many other stock exchanges are affected too as the market turn bearish and stocks, shares and oil prices began to tumble. Many companies and business will face cash flow problems as demand for goods and services are affected and some have/will retrench staff and jobs will be adversely affected. How can a Christian cope in this midst of not just the health crisis but a growing economic and social crisis too? Let us return to biblical principles of work and Christian ambition for contemplation in the current situation.

Theology of Work

Work is a blessing given in the Garden of Eden in a time of perfection to Adam and Eve before the fall (Gen 2:16). Adam was tasked to take care of the garden and to dress it. After the fall of man, there are certain consequences as man has to work from the sweat of his brow and there will be thorns and thistles and death. Work is not a necessary evil as some wrongly conceive it but rather a blessing from God given to man before the Fall, which we can do to glorify God. Col 3:22-24 says, '*Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God; And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*'



Work is an ordinance that God gave to men to glorify Him and occupy himself meaningfully in the employment of his gifts and talents, for the sustenance of himself and his family (1 Tim 5:8), for the economic good of society and for His kingdom's sake. Laziness is a curse as Paul says in 2 Thes 3:11-13, '*For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*' Work is to be fruitfully done six days a week with one day of rest on the Sabbath, with the worship of God (Exo 20:8-10).

There is to be productive and edifying work that supplies mankind with fruitful goods and services as in the cultivation of crops for food or the making of industrial goods for the consumption by man. As Christians we are careful in the choice of our careers as not to be involved in any unsound, unedifying or unethical occupations (prostitutes, thieves, bouncer, croupier, loan sharks, or any gambling related jobs etc.). Nor killing one another or making objects of harm and being a danger to mankind (selling drugs, stealing, robbers, pirates or terrorists etc.) that is contrary to the will of God for us.

Work should be honourably and diligently done, giving of our best with our minds and hands and the talents and gifts that God has bestowed upon us to provide for the family and to be gainfully employed and productive in society and to please and glorify God. Indolence or slothfulness is condemned by Solomon in Prov. 6:6-10 but diligence and hard work is encouraged. Our example is the industrious ant and not the lazy pig. Believers are to be diligent and by their good testimony, in honest hard work, they are to be effective witnesses to the glory of God. Matthew 5:16 says, '*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*' and in Titus 2:14, we

are told to be zealous of good works, which is one of the evidences of our true regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Examples in the Old and New Testament

Work entails responsible and edifying cooperative relationships with others in the workplace. In a healthy working environment, we should have the ability to work competently and to relate effectively to both superiors and subordinates so that we can be good testimonies to reach out for Christ.

Daniel had a desire to honour God first in his life and he was promoted to the top civil service position in both the Babylon and Persian Empires. His right aims rendered him effective and he became a dignified high-ranking officer in both the kingdom of God and man (Dan 1:8,12).

Joseph met the same end when he put God first before his career and he was duly rewarded to be the Prime Minister next to Pharaoh (Gen 39-40). Nehemiah had the godly ambition to build the walls of Jerusalem and God answered his requests and used him mightily to complete the task and revive the people for his own glory (See Neh 1: 2, 8).

In the building of the temple or the Tabernacle in the Old Testament under Moses, as commanded of God, there were various gifted people who worked on the Tabernacle with skilled labour in Exodus 35 and 36 and they were greatly used of God. There were supervisors, masons, silver smiths, gold smiths, weavers and ladies who did the curtains with fine needlework and craft. This was seen also in the New Testament church as Dorcas sewed clothes for the old ladies in winter in Acts 18 and Lydia was a seller of purple in Acts 16, a kind of entrepreneur in those days. Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers and there were others who did work in the other industries in agriculture and in the fields as shepherds. John and James are fishermen and Matthew was a tax collector. There were also those who were doing business and yet others were professional soldiers like Cornelius the centurion who was converted in Acts 10.

Right or Wrong Purposes

There was a popular show on TV some years ago entitled "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" Some took part with a desire to be a millionaire. Others may desire to be a CEO of a company or even a General in the army, which is not wrong in itself but we need to ask the question, 'What is the purpose for these craving for these high positions? Is it alright if it is the will of God for you to lead a simple life and to take a reasonably paid job and have ample time to serve God, time for family, gospel mission, worship and fellowship with God's people?'



It is not wrong to have some kind of ambition in this life, but we need to ask what the ultimate purpose is and the price of it. What do you want to achieve in your life? Is it for selfish gain, power, fame, prestige and self-glory? Or is it for the glory of God and to be a witness for Christ and a good testimony for His kingdom's sake?

If any of our children wants to be a doctor or lawyer, that is often considered laudable. What if our children do not want to be an architect or banker, but something other than what we want for them? What If they are called to be a missionary or preacher of the gospel of Christ to save souls as the Lord wills? Will you approve of it? Some of our ambitions may not be met in the end as they may not be God's will for us. For example, King David wanted to build God a temple, but his son Solomon was chosen instead. In all things we willingly submit to the sovereign will of God as his will is always the best for us. (Eph 5:15-17)

Our Sacred Duty

Our duty or ambition in life is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc 12:13), to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Be a good testimony for Christ, for we are accountable to Him and to make our lives count for eternity as a result of our God-honouring ambitions.



1 Cor 10:31 says, '*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*' Does your work consume you every day and leave you with no time for God and family? I know some construction workers work an average of about 80 hours a week when the norm is 44 hours. Over time work means more pay for them even if it means working on

Sunday to get the extra cash, but is it right before God and is it the best for us physically and spiritually? Is the Sabbath day of worship commanded of God important for us to keep? We need to pray and think carefully that we do not break the Sabbath to the detriment of both our bodies and the well-being of our souls.

Paul brought up the important factor of employing time wisely when he said in Eph. 5:15- 16, '*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*' We have limited time on earth and we need to use it prudently for the Lord before our time is up and eternity begins. Psalm 90:12 says, '*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*'

1 Tim 6:6-10 also says, '*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*' Beware also of covetousness and a greedy quest for secular interests only without a heavenly purpose. For example, a Christian who over works every day just for the purpose of increasing his/her net worth materially, or who is obsessed with accumulating assets or wealth in money making for himself or herself at the expense of worship. We ought to use our talents, time and substance in God's service, or we'll miss eternal blessings. We need to ponder our ways before the Lord

Jer 45:5 says, '*And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.*'

We know of some pastors, evangelists and missionaries who have given up their promising careers to serve the Lord. They studied and trained in a theological college and are serving God full time faithfully, though they could be successful in the secular world. We wonder what Calvin, Luther, Tyndale, Cranmer, Knox and Zwingli could have been in their lifetime if they had not given up their all to serve their God during the Reformation? God is sovereign and blesses the man and woman who submits to His will. There is no greater joy in this life than serving the King of kings.



Paul had fought well and won and completed the race of life (2 Tim 4:6-8). He fulfilled a meaningful calling and a purposeful life for God that will last for eternity. There are eternal rewards in store for those who serve the Lord faithfully. Revelation 14:13 says, '*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*' Paul in Gal 6:9 says, '*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*' and 2 John 8 says, '*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*' Matt 6:21, '*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*' and Matt 6:33 '*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*'

Conclusion

We live in a troubled world today both economically, socially and spiritually. The world is obsessed with success and now rightly occupied with fighting and containing the COVID19 virus outbreak. Believers are concerned and affected too.

In the context of the current situation, we need to examine our objectives in the light of eternity and seek the sovereign will of God first for our lives. Ambition is to be guided by the Word of the Lord. Our vocation is a calling from God. Let us live and work for His glory while there is breath in our nostrils. Know that one day Christ is coming again soon to rule and judge us. What will become of us one day when He returns? Let us make our lives count for eternity, examine ourselves and let our lives be a ready and willing vessel of honour to serve God (2 Tim 2:20-21). This is the greatest joy and ambition, i.e. not just to be great on earth but in eternity in heaven, by being a faithful steward and servant of the most-high God, investing our lives and time and resources in His kingdom and for His Glory till He comes. This is the highest honour and duty for any soul in this temporal life.

Something to pray and think about as we evaluate our lives in the light of the health crisis and of eternity.

Jack Sin

COVID-19 & THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITIES	
	Be PRACTICAL
	Be PRAYERFUL
	Be PROACTIVE
	Be PRUDENT
<i>Be practical about personal and corporate hygiene and safety</i>	
<i>Be prayerful and seek the Lord for his mercy and protection</i>	
<i>Be proactive in encouraging others and sharing Christ and continuing with your life or ministry responsibly.</i>	
<i>Be prudent and participate cautiously in your work, studies or any edifying activity that will build up faith and the kingdom of God with needful precautions.</i>	

Jack Sin

Memory Verse

Joshua 22:5

But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Announcements

1. Rev Jack Sin speaks today on "The Spiritual Imperatives from God" (Joshua 22:1-20)
2. Rev Peter Goh speaks next Sunday on "The Old Soldier Prepares to Break Camp" (Joshua 23:1-16)
3. Sovereign Hope Fellowship meets on Sat 28 Mar, 3pm on "Coping with Stress God's Way" by Eld Jeffrey Cheong.
4. The Christian Perspective of the COVID 19 virus article is being translated into 7 languages (ie Chinese, Tamil, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Spanish, Kannada, Khmer). Those who are interested may request from Pastor.



Let us be committed to study and apply the Bible daily in our lives. Join us for our monthly 1 Sam Bible Study on the 1st Fri of every month.

Pray for the new students of the India Reformed Biblical Seminary under the auspices of Covenant BPC, Bangalore



Pray for Pastor Babu and his church as they start a childcare ministry

