

# By The Sweat Of Your Brow

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Sermon shared by Steve Shepherd

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**Summary:** Christians need to be hard-working people.

**Scripture:** [Genesis 3:19](#) ([add scripture](#))

**Tags:** [Forgiveness General](#) ([add tag](#))

**Denomination:** [Christian/Church of Christ](#)



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**Sermon:**

BY THE SWEAT OF YOUR BROW

Gen. 3:19 "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

INTRO.- Sweat and dirt. Those don't sound very inviting or interesting to me. DO THEY TO YOU?

God said to Adam, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." I think the meaning is this: YOU WILL GET SOMETHING TO EAT WHEN YOU WORK AND SWEAT FIRST.

Essentially, God was saying to all mankind, "You're going to have to work and you will have to sweat in your work."

ILL.- The boss said to Jones, "How long have you been working here?" Jones said, "Ever since I heard you coming down the hall."

ILL.- A man applied for a job and asked the manager, "How many people work in this plant?" The manager replied, "About one in fifteen."

ILL.- A new employee had been caught coming in late for work three times and the fourth morning the foreman decided to read the riot act to him. "Look here," snapped the foreman, "don't you know what time we start to work around here?" "No, sir," said the man, "They're always working when I get here." Brethren, we've all known people like these. Shirkers instead of workers.

ILL.- When I worked for Safeway in the 1960's there were about 5 or 6 of us employees who stocked shelves at night.

We went to work at 10 p.m. and worked until 7 a.m. the next morning. But, of course, not everybody worked at night. For one thing, there was no boss around to keep an eye on us. And number two, it was sometimes hard to stay awake at night.

We sold lawn chairs at our Safeway store and I remember one fellow who opened up a lawn chair and slept most of the night. He didn't work for Safeway very long.

ILL.- While working in a service station in Bayard, Iowa, the owner, Shorty Rose, told me about the time when he was in the army, working in the motor pool. He said he knew of guys who would slide underneath a truck and pretend they were working by tying their hands up to the underneath of the truck and then they would go to sleep.

ILL.- In a recent survey of workers across the USA, nearly 85% said that they could work harder on

their jobs. And more than half of those surveyed said they could double their effectiveness at their work if they wanted to.

ILL.- A certain bum said to a man, "Give me a buck." The man replied, "If you asked for a quarter I might give it to you, but a buck! You must be crazy!" The bum said, "You can cough up the buck or not. That's up to you, but don't tell me how to run my business."

ILL.- She was known as "The Welfare Queen." Linda Taylor was her name. Taylor bilked the Social Security Administration out of \$15,000 on her claim that her daughter was deaf, retarded, and totally disabled as a result of a school fire in Chicago in 1953. The truth was, however, her daughter was quite normal and had never attended the school.

According to government investigators, Miss Taylor used as many as 100 aliases to defraud the treasury of more than \$200,000. One time she received food stamps while owning two luxury cars and a station wagon. Another source said she \$154,000 in welfare in a single year, using 14 different aliases.

Another source said she used 127 different aliases in 14 states, passing herself off as a heart surgeon, a witch doctor, and a widow of 8 husbands. SHE WAS A BUSY WOMAN! This one particular source said that her welfare fraud may have exceeded a million dollars.

That woman, Linda Taylor, worked very hard at getting out of hard work! And if she had expended that energy in honest work, no telling how far she could have gone in life.

Brethren, there will always shirkers and slackers in life, but God never meant for it to be that way. Since this is Labor Day weekend, I want us to think about work.

PROP.- I have two thoughts to share about work.

1- The pain of work

2- The pleasure of work

## **I. THE PAIN OF WORK**

God said to Adam, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." TEV "You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything."

I have never farmed and don't want to, but I do believe that farming is hard work and makes a person sweat a lot.

I Thess. 4:11-12 "Make your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands...."

II Thess. 3:6-8 "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle (lazy) and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle (lazy) when we were with you, not did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you."

The Scripture commands us to work and to sweat in our work. Paul said "work with your hands." He also said, "We worked night and day." That sounds like our work is supposed to somewhat difficult or painful.

ILL.- When I was 25 years old I moved to Central Iowa to preach. The small town was Bayard, IA. I was young, healthy and strong back then. I lifted weights, competed in Olympic style weightlifting and could lift 270 lbs. over my head.

I preached in a church where we had several farmers. They grew corn and soy beans, but also had livestock and made hay.

One particular farmer in the church decided he would put my weightlifting muscles to the test in the hay field. AND I FOUND OUT THAT LIFTING HAY BALES AND LIFTING WEIGHTS COULD BE TWO

## DIFFERENT THINGS.

We made clover hay in those old square bales. Someone drove the baler or made the hay. NOT ME. Someone drove the hay wagon. NOT ME. And someone had to walk behind the hay wagon and toss those hay bales into the wagon. ME.

By the end of the day, we were nearly black from sweat and the dirt and dust of the hay. Dirty, sweaty, itching. We were so dirty we had to wash off in a horse trough or else hose one another down with the garden hose.

Those hay bales weighed about 80 lbs., I was told. 80 lbs. is not much in comparison to 270 lbs, but after a day of throwing them around, they were plenty! Ouchy, achy, sweaty, dirty, and smelly!

I must admit that making hay was probably one of the sweatiest jobs I've ever had in life.

Now as far as pain is concerned, my gratitude goes to the local grain elevator company in Bayard, Iowa, that I worked for part-time.

ILL.- One of my major jobs was scooping corn and soy beans, which I discovered was very hard work and sometimes painful. There were times when I would wake in the middle of the night and my hands hurt so badly that I had to go soak them in hot water in order to get any relief at all.

Needless to say, I did not stay in the grain elevator business nor in the making hay business!

Brethren, I believe there is a certain amount of pain and sweat associated in all kinds or forms of work. It may not always be physical pain, however. It may be emotional or mental pain. If your job is a people-job, i.e. dealing with people much of the time then more than likely you will suffer from emotional and mental pain.

ILL.- My older brother, Larry, who has been in the grocery/retail business all his life (some 44 years) and is now a store manager in Overland Park, Ks, said to me, "Doing the physical work in the store is not hard. Dealing with people is what is hard and particularly, dealing with my employees."

Brethren, I feel for you in your pain! I don't want to hurt in life and I don't want you to hurt in life. But the fact is, we will experience some pain in life! And some of it will come from our work!

I want to be a "pain reliever," not a "pain giver." I want to help relieve some of your pain in life.

How do we get any relief from the pain of certain types of work? WELL, TAKE SOME PAIN MEDICATION WITH YOU TO WORK!

ILL.- I have to laugh about this because when I worked for the Silk Tree Factory in Cape Girardeau, MO, I carried my little plastic Wal-Mart sack with me every day to work. In that sack I had the following items: ibuprofen, Excedrin, Sudafed, Aleve, cold medicine, Tums, Meclizine for dizziness, and Prozac. NO, not Prozac! And who said I was a hypochondriac?!

Brethren, you can laugh all you want but I had many Silk Tree associates coming to me for headache and pain medication! And no, I don't sell drugs!

Hey! I am thankful for pain medication and other types of medication which help to give people some relief from their pain in life!

But brethren, in your little bag of goodies don't forget the best pain medication there is: THE GREAT PHYSICIAN HIMSELF!

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Jesus was essentially saying, "If you are hurting from your life and your work then come to me. I will give you some rest and relief." JESUS CAN AND WILL!

When pain strikes you in any form, especially people-pain, call out to your Great Physician!

ILL.- Gene Cotton is 55 years old and has brain cancer. He lives in Anna, IL. He is a fine Christian man and has suffered many seizures as a result of his brain cancer. Recently, he suffered one of his worst in his upstairs bathroom. Here is what Gene said about it.

"About two weeks ago I started having a different and harder type of seizures. One day I had 17 of them. The seizures which I had always experienced before would start with a fading feeling in my head

followed with slight jerking on my left side for a minute or so and a relieved feeling in my brain afterward.

“With the new seizures the toes on my left foot go numb and curl under, followed by the numbness going up my leg to my knee or above. I then have extremely violent jerking in the left leg that causes my head to snap and hit whatever surface I am on. These may last up to 4 or 5 minutes and make my body hurt but not give me a relieved feeling in my brain.

“On July 24th I had my worse seizure in our upstairs bathroom. I pulled the towel rack out of the wall when I went down and the seizure lasted almost five minutes. It was so violent I was sore in all areas of my body. I really didn’t believe I was going to pull out of this one.

“Laying there in Kathy’s lap (his wife) as she prayed for me and stroked my shoulders I called out for the only help there was available. ‘God, will you help me! God, will you help me!’ By His grace the seizure finally stopped. I understand God’s grace to others but I don’t understand His grace to me. I know that there are times when only His grace is sufficient.”

Brothers and sisters, in life and in our work we will experience pain. Expect it and prepare for it. Lean on the Great Physician. Look to Him. Let His grace bring you relief and peace.

## **II. THE PLEASURE OF WORK**

How’s that? What? Pleasure in work, you say? How? When? Where?

Eccl. 2:10 “My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.”

Eccl. 2:24 “A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too is from the hand of God.”

Eccl. 5:18 “Then I realized that it is good and proper for man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun and during the few days of life God has given him - for this is his lot.”

Apparently, God intended for us to get a certain amount of pleasure or joy from our work even though we have to sweat while doing it.

Obviously, some people enjoy their work more than others do. Some people are blessed to find a certain type of work which they enjoy.

HOW MANY OF YOU DO ENJOY OR PERHAPS LIKE THE WORK THAT YOU DO? Please raise your hand if you do.

ILL.- I recently saw an article entitled, “If you think your job stinks....” Many people feel that way about their job or work. “If you think your job stinks then try mine.”

The US Department of Labor recently ranked jobs according to six criteria: income, stress, physical demands, potential growth, job security, and work environment.

The worst job overall is being an ocean fisherman because of its long hours and low pay. Fisherman, David Green of Portland, Maine, agrees. He said, “You have to have a lot of stamina to do the job. It’s hard work and it’s dangerous. You don’t fish unless you love it.”

The best-paying job? NBA Basketball player. They average making \$2.5 million a year. And the worst-paying job is waiting on tables.

For those thinking of becoming teachers and police officers, the survey offered this message: Low pay, high stress and less than desirable working conditions.

The worst-ranked jobs were manual labor with lumberjacks, oil field roustabouts and fisherman at the bottom of the list.

One 89-year-old lady said, “People used to go out and work hard to support their families. Now they look for the least amount of work they can do.” OUCH! That doesn’t speak well for our American society!

Brethren, I am saying that you are blessed if you have a job which gives you a certain amount of pleasure, joy or satisfaction! BE GRATEFUL! BE THANKFUL IF YOU DO!

ILL.- Dr. Charles Mayo of the famous Mayo Clinic once said, "There is no fun like work." He also said, "I have always liked that motto, for I believe in it. To be without work is almost to be without life. For it is work which creates interest in life." I BELIEVE IT.

If you don't like your job, how can you learn to like it? Perhaps some stories will help.

ILL.- A man was found making a clean, shining beauty out of a rusty, old tugboat engine. Someone asked the man how he was able to do that and he replied, "I GOT A GLORY!"

ILL.- Another man watched three men at work. He asked, "What are you doing?" The first man said, "I'm working for so much money today." The second man said, "I'm cutting stone." The third man said, "I'M BUILDING A CATHEDRAL."

ILL.- Someone said to a traffic officer in a busy city, "Yours must be a dog's life?" The officer replied, "It would be if I were a dog, but I'm not a dog, I'm a saver of lives! I've already saved three today."

Brethren, what is it that will help us to get some pleasure from our work in life? Attitude makes the difference. Some of the people in three stories had the right attitude about life and work.

One man "got a glory," as he called it. Have you "got a glory" in your work? To me, this is the idea of visualizing the potential for doing good in your particular job. Have you "got a glory"? Have you realized how much you could do in your work? Have you realized how you could bless others?

Another man said he was building a cathedral. He wasn't just working for a paycheck, like so many others. If you are working just for the money you will never find any pleasure in your work.

In a sense, we all are building cathedrals in our lives! We need to sense this, feel this and try to build a good one to bring glory to God!

And that police officer was out there saving lives! He wasn't just directing traffic. He was out there to help people!

In a very real sense, every type of work we do affects people! And we need to think about this more. WE ALL NEED TO CONSIDER HOW OUR JOB CAN BLESS OTHERS OR CAN HELP OTHERS!

Your work is not just work! It's doing something for someone else. It is giving service. It is helping others. It may actually be ministering to others! No matter what we do in life, we are actually serving others!

You name the job and I can tell you how it affects others! And if we will think more about how to help others, how to give good service, it will make all the difference in the world in our work!

We'll do a better job!

Not only will attitude make the difference in your work but also "altitude." Do you have the right "altitude" in your work?

ILL.- A boy named Jimmy worked in a grocery store after school every day. One day a customer came in and after making a purchase of fruit, he whispered in Jimmy's ear, "Throw in a few extra pieces of fruit. The boy who worked here before you always used to do that and I would give him a tip for it."

But Jimmy refused, saying, "I can't do that. The boss wouldn't approve." "But," the man said, "The boss isn't in." Jimmy replied, "Oh yes, he is. MY BOSS IS ALWAYS IN. YOU SEE, I'M A CHRISTIAN."

Brethren, that's having the right "altitude" in your work.

Col. 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Brethren, when you realize that the Lord is your ultimate employer and you want to please Him it can make a bigger and better difference in your work.

Having the right attitude and altitude can help to bring pleasure to you in your work.

CONCLUSION-----

ILL.- A great doctor once gave this prescription for life. "If your health is threatened, then work. If disappointments come to you, then work. If you inherit money, continue to work. If you have a

nervous breakdown, then go to work. If your dreams are shattered, then work. If sorrow overwhelms you or friends prove untrue, then you must work. If you are happy in life, then keep on working. Idleness brings doubt, fear and evil. No matter what ails you, continue to work.”

I believe those words. Work is a tonic of life and for life. Work may bring some pain but it can also bring a great deal pleasure when put in it's proper perspective. BE A WORKER. DON'T QUIT WORKING!