

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## The Christian Work Ethic

(Jerry Fite)

It seems many today view getting out of work as a virtue. Its how many days you have off from work, instead of the hours you do work that appeals to many. How can I get by with the least amount of work seems to be the creed of many making their way through life.

As parents, we must help our children growing up in today's world develop a good attitude toward work, especially hard work. Lofty achievements demand difficult work. Such goals are not achieved by seeing the least amount of energy you can muster to just get by. Great goals are achieved through tedious hours of concentrated work on each aspect of a goal.

Paul gives us what has been called by some “*the Christian work ethic*”. He writes, “*in diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*” (Romans 12:11). This work ethic is conducive for our work in the church as Christians, or, as Christians laboring in the secular world.

The Greek word translated “*diligence*” is a word denoting “*earnestness*” and characterizing the spirit of “*let's get to it; the*

*sooner, the better!*” Paul warns such a spirit should never be dampened with “*slothfulness*”.

Thomas Jefferson is reported to have said, “*Determine never to be idle... It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing*. Have you noticed that nothing ever gets done, until you actually do it? It is easy to become slothful when we wring our hands contemplating how difficult the job will be, and waste our energy that should be channeled to start the job. Worried over how much work is ahead soon fades once we get started. We soon are amazed with Jefferson of how much may be done if get going, and keep doing.

In the work of the Lord, more study of the Word, more efforts to save others, and more service rendered to others are accomplished because we refuse to be slack, but fill our moments with earnest haste to accomplish each task. In the secular world, your boss may be pleasantly surprised of how much work you accomplish before noon. If you are not rewarded with a raise, you may be rewarded in critical times by keeping your job, as the slackers loose theirs.

How we go about our work is also part of the work ethic. We are to be “*fervent in spirit...*”. A lot of energy is produced when the water is boiling. The Greek word translated “*fervent*” means “*to be hot, to boil*”. Our attitude toward what we do, or what we are about to do is an important element in the Christian work ethic. If you had listened to Apollos preach, you would not have the impression that he was merely doing his job. “*Being fervent of spirit, he was speaking and teaching...and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue*” (Acts 18:25-26). Approaching each task with fervency and enthusiasm not only gets the work started, but fuels us to complete the task with success.

Any work ethic needs an overall goal or purpose. Paul gives us the Lord as the goal of all our activity: “*serving the Lord*”. Even in the first-century slave-master relationship, the slave was to serve his master faithfully, and gladly knowing his work was “*as to Christ*”; or “*as unto the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:5, 7).

Paul sums it up in another place: “*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men*” (Col. 3:23).