I think it was that eminent theologian Garfield who said, “AH - Hard work, I could watch it for hours!”

Things changed when sin came into the world. Before Adam and Eve sinned, they ***GOT*** to work, tending the garden. After fall they ***HAD*** to work, toiling and tilling the ground.

In 1940, the revised Fair Labor Standards Act established the 40-hour workweek. Any work above 40 hours was classified as overtime and required a higher rate of pay. Labor Day was created a half-century before that legal milestone, but it certainly includes gratitude for such initiatives as the 40-hour workweek. Nonetheless, some people feel we need to be logging more of our 168 weekly hours at work. Jack Ma, co-founder of Alibaba (China’s version of Amazon), “is a big fan of extreme overwork” and praises the “996” schedule. Those numbers stand for 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. 6 days per week. Ma, one of the richest men in China, called the 12-hour workday a “blessing.” Even the state-run media railed against Ma’s blog about work and called the 996 “unfair and impractical.” Tesla’s Elon Musk claims “nobody ever changed the world on 40 hours a week.” Uber used to rally behind the slogan, “work smarter, harder, and longer,” and WeWork used its co-*working* spaces to post the phrase “don’t stop when you’re tired, stop when you’re done.” To the chagrin of those pushing longer hours, or as some call it, “toil glamour,” research shows that people who work more than 55 hours a week “perform ***worse*** than those who go home at a normal hour and rest.” Work was God’s gift to man before the Fall, but the curse of sin has altered work and our understanding of it ever since” (*The Week, 5/3/19, p.34).*

Many feel that work is a necessary evil. We all need money to function in this world. We need money for food, for necessities and for niceties. We need money for gas and for groceries. We work so that we can have money for living, but we ought not be so busy earning a living that we miss out on having a life.

Paul has given instructions for Christian living to different groups in the church at Ephesus. His instructions are good for us as well. We have noted that there is a key word for each group. **Wives**—”***Submit***;” **Husbands**- “***Love***;” **Children**— “***obey***”; **Fathers** “***don’t exasperate***.”

Paul’s key word for the **Workers** is “*OBEY*.” As we look at this principle, we will consider three aspects : HOW TO DO IT; WHY TO DO IT AND WHAT COMES FROM DOING IT.

Baptist scholar Curtis Vaughan wrote, “It is a surprise to some people that the apostles did not denounce slavery in unequivocal language and demand its immediate overthrow. But the apostles did not conceive of themselves primarily as social reformers; they were first and foremost heralds of the good news of salvation in Christ. Yet they did not condone slavery. Indeed, they announced the very principles (such as that of the complete spiritual equality of slave and master) that ultimately destroyed this terrible blot on civilization. The apostles’ approach to this social evil was like that of a woodsman who strips the bark off a tree and leaves it to die”

Vaughan also wrote “A study of the present passage, as well as similar passages in Colossians (3:22–4:1), 1 Peter (3:18–22), and Philemon (especially vs. 16), reveals that the New Testament writers sought to give the slaves a sense of dignity in their work and to comfort them in their suffering. Moreover, they sought to regulate the institution among their own people by reminding Christian masters that they should treat their slaves with fairness and kindness.

In the passage now under consideration Paul at the very outset points out that the slave/master relationship belongs only to the sphere of **earthly** things. The phrase “masters according to the flesh” (vs. 5) implies **another** relationship belonging to a higher, spiritual sphere where Christ is Master.

Paul’s words fit perfectly into our work-a-day world. It is divine instruction. Paul gives us ‘Wisdom for Workers.’

**I. HOW TO DO IT (5-7)**

A. *With fear and trembling* (5)

We are work at our physical work the same way we work at our spiritual work. In Phil 2.12, Paul says, “*Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose*” (Phil 2:12-13).

B. *In the sincerity of your heart* (5)

*In the single-ness of your heart* - simplicity, mental honesty

C. *Not just when being watched* (6)

Character is who we are in the dark.

Integrity is doing the right thing even when nobody is looking.

D. *Doing God’s will* (6)

Our work should be fulfilling God’s will.

Our work is a responsibility from the lord.

Our work is an opportunity from the Lord.

E. *From the heart* (6)

Literally—”*out of your soul*”

F. With a good attitude (7)

Literally - “*Out of a good-mind*”

Consider many in the Bible who were consistent, dedicated workers, even under less-than-ideal situations. Noah, Daniel and Joseph come to mind.

As Paul lays it out for us, our work is inclusive of our whole being. He says it should come the ***heart***, out our ***souls*** and from a good ***mind***. We should be working as if we are doing the will of God with our hearts, souls and minds!

In 2017, Reverend Emmanuel Momoh was *working* with his team of miners in the diamond fields of Sierra Leone when they came upon a large unusual stone. It was orange with red speckles that looked something like little droplets of palm oil. They nearly tossed it aside as it appeared worthless, but because it was so unique, they took it to a local diamond dealer to see what it was. The strange rock turned out to be one of the biggest diamonds ever uncovered in Sierra Leone. It was a 700-carat diamond in the rough worth nearly $50 million.

Because of its value, the stone was turned over to government authorities and all interested parties had to anxiously await their cut of the share.  Some of the greatest treasures are discovered **in the midst of our everyday work**. (*Houston Chronicle, 3/26/17, p.A24)*

**II. WHY TO DO IT (5-7)**

A. You are serving your “*human masters*”

As Larry the Cable guy says, we are “gittin’ ‘er done”

B. You are serving Christ

1. As you would Christ (5)

2. Not to please people (6)

3. As slaves of Christ (6)

4. As to the Lord (7)

**III. WHAT COMES FROM DOING IT (8)**

A. Good gets done (8)

B. We will *receive back from the Lord* (8)

The book of Proverbs challenges us to go to the ant. The Bible says, “*Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. 7 Without leader, administrator, or ruler, 8 it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest*” (Pro 6:6-8).

Our work should be done with our hearts, minds and souls. We ought to work as if we are working ***for the Lord***, because we really ***are***! The good that we do will come back to us. That is promise of the word of God. It is part of the Lord’s divine economy.

An old hymn says, “1 O land of rest, for thee I sigh! When will the moment come When I shall lay my armor by And dwell in peace at home? 2 To Jesus Christ I fled for rest; He bade me cease to roam, And lean for comfort on His breast Till He conducts me home.

[Chorus]

We'll work till Jesus comes; We'll work till Jesus comes; We'll work till Jesus comes, And we'll be gathered home.