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The Gospel Scope & Vocation

August 28, 2022



For The King - Rocky Ramsey

"Therefore, a poor workman, faithfully using the gift God has given him, pleases God no less than a preacher of the Word, for he served God in the same faith and with the same Spirit." - Martin Luther's Commentary on Galatians Chapter 5

This week we apply the Gospel to the idea of vocation (calling)/work. Many Christian teachers want to make you feel bad for your work, however Christ never meant any such thing in his word. We are all priests and workers in the kingdom of God. Thanks for listening!

Key Texts:

- * Romans 12:1
- * Exodus 19:6 with 1 Peter 2:9
- * Matthew 5:16
- * 1 Corinthians 7
- * Ezra 1:5
- * Exodus 28:2-3 ; 36:1
- * Ecclesiastes 3:12

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Transcript

[Music] Don't think I will even ask you to make Jesus Lord of your life. That's the most preposterous thing I could ever tell you to do. Jesus Christ is Lord of your life.

Whether you serve him or not, whether you bless him, curse him, hate him, or love him, he is the Lord of your life because God has given him a name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow. In tongue confess that he is Lord. Some of you will bow out of the grace that has been given to you and others will bow because your kneecaps will be broken by the one who rules the nations with a rod of iron.

[Music] And I'll not apologize for this God of the Bible.

[Music] Hello brothers and sisters. All of you that might be hearing my voice right now, welcome to the For The King podcast where we proclaim the edicts of the king, namely and chiefly, that Yahweh reigns baby.

He reigns on high. Christ the king is seated on his throne right now. He's not waiting to receive a throne.

So, appreciate you guys spending some time with us on the For The King podcast. We are continuing in our gospel scope series that Bryce and I have been doing. So, that would be my co-host here.

So Bryce, you want to say hi? Let everybody know you're here. Hello. Hi.

What's up? Good. He's here and we're ready to get rocking and rolling. So, we've been finishing up the gospel scope series.

I think we said last gospel scope that we were going to be done, Bryce gave me a great idea of a needed subject that we ought to cover before we move on from the scope of the gospel. And that would be the doctrine of vocation. How God's good news to us, his goodwill towards mankind and sending his son, applies to and redeems our vocation.

So, we're going to get into that today, exactly what vocation means. So, Bryce, can you kind of start us off with maybe some teaching on what exactly that word means, where it

comes from? What's the goal of the doctrine of vocation in the Christian life? Right. And this is something that we've talked about this before.

You brought this to my attention. Vocation is really something that was brought up by the reformers. So, in Roman Catholicism, the whole mindset of serving God was done in the cloisters.

Yeah. So, this would be in the nunneries or in the monasteries, that that was the chief and premier way that they could worship God, was by rejecting a calling in life anywhere else outside the monastery. That was really your chief way to glorify God.

And the reformer said that this is essentially a blasphemous thought, that even the average man, the layman, the carpenter or the mason, even they could worship and serve God faithfully and be holy themselves. So, they came up with this doctrine called vocation, which essentially comes from the Latin word "vocat" or "vocat" depending on what version of Latin you want to use. And essentially, it literally just means calling.

Right. And this is something that Paul will bring up in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. He says, "Live as you are called." Right. There's a time for everything.

There is a season in which God has set us in. There is a vocation that God has given us as people to live in. So, vocation is essentially where God has called you.

Are you a carpenter? Are you a mason? Are you an electrician? Are you an insurance agent? Do you deliver mail? Right. That's your, those are your vocations. It is your calling of God.

Yeah. Yeah. Even today in the sermon we heard, which is we're going through Ecclesiastes, which is all about the idea of vocation and work.

And our pastor this morning brought up in chapter 3 verse 1, the word, there's a time and a season for things can be more accurately translated. There's a time and an appointed time for those times that God's giving. So, like calling can be thought of as your appointed time on earth, what you're appointed to do.

And he made a great statement that if you're going to be appointed, that means there has to be an appointor, which would be God himself. Amen. Okay.

Yeah. So, that's what we mean when we're talking about vocation, when we're using that word. Comes out of the Reformation, it's a Latin word, all it means is calling.

So, as with many doctrines in God's word, we can always find most of, I mean, we can find almost any doctrine, this being the stage being set in the first three chapters of Genesis. So, let's go there to see how God has created order, how he made things as we develop this biblical idea of vocation and how God's gospel applies to it. So, there's this

idea of order in the scriptures God has given the command Adam and Eve to, specifically Adam to lead out in this, of ordering, taking dominion, keeping and guarding the garden and his wife.

So, Adam is to take a chaotic world, a chaotic overgrown jungle and turn it into a garden to create order out of it. So, when, you know, God told Adam and Eve to do this task, and specifically Adam, he was giving them a spiritual calling through a physical command, right? To go into work and keep the garden. But there's also going to be a component of faith that is going to accompany this.

Adam had to do this by faith. He had to believe and trust in God to do this, right? But it's also this really physical work of just literally creating a garden, right? So, sometimes in the Christian life, we want to overly ecclesiize things where the only meaningful work you can do is, the only meaningful work you can do is in the church, being a minister. Having some type of ministry, being a missionary, going overseas, that's the only kind of vocation that you can be called to.

Besides that, everything else is kind of dirty and you're kind of getting your hands caught up in civilian pursuits rather than the real war of Christianity, right? But Adam and Eve are given this physical task of working and keeping the garden with the metaphysical ramifications behind it by faith, believing in God and trusting in him and extending his kingdom, right? So, if you put anything into order, so the principle I'm trying to extract here that's in Genesis is, if you put anything into order with the heart of faith, whether, you know, whatever that might be, it is a physical and a metaphysical sacrifice pleasing to God. And this is most, this is very clearly said in Romans 12.1, where we're to offer our bodies as a physical sacrifice, sorry, as a spiritual sacrifice to God. We offer our physical bodies, the things we do, the obedience we give to God in this life towards God as a sacrifice that's pleasing in sight.

So, what do you think about that, Bryce? How am I doing here? Yeah, I think that's fundamentally a killer point and this really puts to shame the cross-conference. So, David Glatt and John Piper say that you're either, there's two sorts of Christians, you're either a sender or a set one. Yeah.

So, really, the only good that a blue collar worker is only for his money to give to a missionary. Yeah, exactly. That's essentially the only good that that man can do.

So, like Rocky's saying, it's an overly ecclesiized, is that the word that you used? Yeah, I don't know. It's an overly ecclesiized sort of idolatry, essentially. And that even reminds me of, and even in Genesis 4, the parable, I almost said the parable of Cain and Abel.

What am I talking about? The chapter with Cain and Abel. Yeah, there it is. Both of them bring sacrifices to God according to their work, right? So, it talks about how Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.

And Abel was a shepherd, so he brought to God a sheep. Right? That was his offering. So, you see even there, the principle of God is accepting the calling that he's given you.

He's given Abel the calling of being a shepherd, so he accepts the sheep as an offering. Right? Like, that's kind of the same thing. He's accepting the offering and the calling that you were given.

Ultimately, by faith, that's why Cain was rejected. Yes, again, yeah. But even still, his offer was accepted by God because that was his calling.

So, we see that God has distributed to all mankind what they are to do. Right? You have a very - just as you have varying different members of the body of Christ of different giftings, you have various different natural giftings when it comes to your work in the world. Yes.

Right? And God loves and cherishes these things. So, I think you fundamentally hit it on the head. No, yeah.

I love you bringing up the cross-conference. There's this false dichotomy there. You're either sending or going.

I mean, that's a good critique of modern-day evangelicalism. I mean, that's - they want to make you feel dirty for your work, you know? And that really is just a return to Roman Catholicism, really, and their view of work. Right? Which is sad.

It's really sad because it disenfranchises men that are godly men that love the Lord and are raising their families in the faith. They're doing - they're following God the way God's prescribed to them. They're not denying anything in the faith, yet Piper and Platt want to convict you.

They want to make you guilty over something you ought not to feel guilty over. And I think the fundamental problem in the Christian West right now is we do not need more street preachers. What we need is more blue-collar dads who come home and do family worship with their kids and excel in their job.

Yeah. That's what we need. Yeah.

Oftentimes, we literally flip the kingdom on its head. The kingdom advances most predominantly through the family. Yep.

And the family is surrounded and governed by dad, who's a worker. Exactly. Right? So if dad is the best dang worker that he can be, and he comes home and he loves his children, and he kisses his wife, and he prays for his kids and reads them the Scriptures, that's acceptable to God.

Exactly. But these missionaries who pretty much damn America, and they go elsewhere

to people who are not their own and seek to share their gospel with them, oftentimes, that's the biggest piece of idolatry that they have ever done. Yep.

And I think that's a huge issue. Yeah, it very well can be. Yeah, I agreed.

It can be. Obviously, missions is a good, godly thing. Exactly.

It doesn't have to be. For a lot of American Christians, it totally is. Oh, America, it's too hard to win my atheistic neighbor.

Let me go to try to some spiritual jungle where there were at least they believe in a god, and then I can win them. It's this romanticized view of missions. And you do.

You abandon your people that need to hear the gospel. This pagan country we live in now, America, right? We need a good view of vocation here so that people set down roots of bare fruit. You cannot bear fruit if you never set down roots.

So, yeah. So I think we've hammered that point pretty well. A few other texts to corroborate what we're saying.

You got 1 Corinthians 10, 31. Whatever you do, whether you eat or you drink, do it all for the glory of God. Colossians 3, 17, do everything in the name of Jesus Christ, the honor of His name, whatever you do.

Also foundational to this idea of being able to do everything to the glory of God that, again, comes out of the Reformation, that the doctrine of vocation exists in 1906 and then reiterated in the New Testament in 1 Peter 2, 9, where we have the priesthood of all believers. We are. What is God fashioning His people to that cling to Him by faith, by their father Abraham? Like, sorry, like their father Abraham, cling to God by faith while He's making us into a royal priesthood.

We all are interceding for the world. We're salt and light in the world through the work and the vocation and the calling we're at as priests, with the people that we are acting as priests in. And even on the heels of that 1 Peter 2, 9, I'd love to do a podcast of this eventually, but I'm just going to touch on it real quick, is that we're a holy nation.

The idea of being a nation within a nation. We're the Christian nation, the kingdom of God within America, the non-Christian nation right now, nation within a nation, or even Jeremiah 29 stuff, right? You're a nation within a nation, right? You're setting down roots. God's going to prosper you there.

So, and you do that through your work, doing work well. So the priesthood of all believers is fundamental here to this discussion. Anything you want to add there, Bryce? Yeah, and this just fundamentally goes against potpourri.

Like that is why the Protestants heralded this position is because it is all throughout the

scriptures that Catholics were destroying the working man because they were saying that he was less holy than all these people in the monasteries and in the nunneries. Exactly. But true religion is a religion that is founded and surrounds the family.

Yes. That's what true Christianity is. That's what it was in the early church.

That's what it was in the Reformation. And that's what it ought to be now is a family found or a religion founded in the family upon working men who love the Lord and serve him in their respective fields. Amen.

Yeah. Because God's given us all a position. Yes.

We all have our our ranking that we ought to do well in. Yep. And we got to remember here, as we're doing our work, we do it in a godly manner.

We work according to God's law. We're not saying that, oh, do the best you can and cut corners. Try to just make as much money.

We're not talking about making money here. We're talking about doing a good work that's pleasing to God by faith. That's what we're talking about.

Right. And then Matthew 5 16 is another great text for this. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is saying, again, it's on the heels of your salt and light of the earth.

Your city set on a hill. And then he says, you know, do these good works so that they might glorify your father in heaven. So we need to remember just because the Christian doctrine of justification by faith alone doesn't mean that we don't do good works.

Right. People might criticize Christianity for that. That means you don't have to do good things.

Right. Christianity is most certainly concerned with your obedience to Christ. And Bryce brought up this morning when he was teaching in Sunday school, your obedience is tied directly to your joy.

Your strength, the joy of the Lord being your strength. If you don't, if you're not obeying God and you're grieving the Holy Spirit, you will be grieved with it. So if we're going to do these good works, right, without ever putting them above faith as justifying us, but realizing that they're there are what justify our faith, right? There are faith being worked out.

We need to be doing these good works within the one of the biggest callings on your life, which is going to be the way you provide for your family and make money. You're calling what God has called you to. He's appointed you in this time in this season for the toil under the sun that you have while looking to him and gazing up to him past the sun to the heavenlies.

That's good. Yeah. Anything there, Bryce? No, that's really solid.

Thank you. So we also, Bryce brought up earlier, 1 Corinthians 7, we need to keep that in mind too. Paul's talking about your position and your job, right, in that text.

If you're called, if you've been called as a slave or made as a slave, but earn your freedom if you can. That's an important, again, that's an important text in this. You should go read that to think more about this.

Last things I want to bring up, and then we're going to finish up with just a general discussion on the book of Ecclesiastes, would be Ezra 1, 5, and then Exodus 28, 3. I'm going to read Exodus 28, 3 real quick. This is God commanding the people to make holy garments for the priests in Exodus here. "You shall make holy garments for Aaron, your brother, for glory, and for beauty.

You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of skill." Or that word can also be rendered spirit of wisdom, right? So God is enlisting these men that have this, like, very godly attribute of being tailors, right, being able to make garments. And God is saying, you need to find these men that I've put the spirit of wisdom to make, you know, to tailor garments well. God is claiming them as his own.

These are my people with my skill I put in them. I think that's really important. The same thing happens in Ezra when they're going to rebuild the temple.

Ezra is finding the men that God's appointed to be masons and stone cutters and things like that. Yeah, and it's the same thing in Solomon's reign, too. He appoints the carpenters, the masons to build the temple of God.

Yeah. And what we need to realize is it's either in 1st or 2nd Peter, I can't exactly remember, we are building up the spiritual kingdom of God. We are setting one stone upon another as we are building God's kingdom.

And he has appointed each of us in our station to do that in what he's given us. So if we're a carpenter, we ought to be the best carpenter. Rocky is an environmental engineer and he's wanting to start a small business doing permaculture.

And what that means for Rocky is he reads a lot on that topic. He wants to know every single minute area in permaculture and environmental engineering and ecology so that he can perform at a better degree than everyone else. That's what he's doing, right? He's trying to be the most efficient in his trade.

So I think oftentimes as Christians, even Reformed Christians sometimes, we can get so caught up in reading our systematic theologies that we don't get caught up in being and excelling in the fields that were appointed. Amen. Because that's the natural means of how God is going to spread his kingdom.

Yeah. It's through work. It's through family.

It's through evangelizing your neighbor. Exactly. It is through street preaching as well.

Don't get me wrong. But we have to prioritize these things. That's awesome, Bryce.

I'm glad you brought that up. I mean, that's what these early Christian scientists in the 17th century, like Isaac Newton, saw himself as uncovering God's secrets in the world. Yes.

You know, that's like what if I'm studying permaculture or something, all I'm doing is looking at the way God made the world. Any scientific empirical endeavor that's based on an induction, you're just you're just looking at the way God you're just discovering what God made. That's all you're doing.

And it still is a spiritual act if you do it by faith. Again, you like you ascend to these facts, the knowledge of the world by fearing the Lord, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. If you're going to truly understand permaculture or ecology or whatever, you have to ascend to it by faith.

Yeah. And even Bryce, in your vocation, you know, like being able to cut wood very precisely as a carpenter to build a home that's well built. That is a, you know, it's a spiritual act, obviously, because it's done by faith in a true understanding of the way God made the world.

Geometry, right? Geometry. Right. So, yeah.

And that reminds me, if any of you have availability, look up Westminster Hall and look up an image of that. And you will find some of the most beautiful carpentry that you've ever seen in your life. And this was done by Christians.

Yeah. Like Christians in the medieval period, they just built beautiful things because they were so proficient in their trade. Think about William Shakespeare, one of the greatest man of literature ever.

Yeah. And it can be argued that, or I've heard it argued that he may have actually been a Puritan. Yeah.

A Christian. Right. I think of John Bunyan, the Bill of progress.

That's one of the greatest works of fiction, of allegory. And yeah, it was written by a Christian. J.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.

Christian, you know? Yeah. Yeah. Christians ought to be like these people.

We should hone our craft. Christians should be the kind of people that hone their craft. I

guess I'll leave it at that.

All right, Bryce, can you finish this up as last thought here? Talk a little bit about Ecclesiastes, the ideas we've been conveying here at our church, our local congregation here, what we've been learning there about work and how work can be redeemed and why we think it's burdensome. But we ought not to think it's burdensome. Tell me why.

Right. So the book of Ecclesiastes is essentially Solomon's memoirs concerning his life that he has built the greatest structures. He's done the most vast things.

His kingdom is a vast and ever-expanding kingdom going over the face of the globe. And yet all the while, he points out this very fact that everything is futile. It is vanity of vanities and it's worthless.

And this is Solomon as talking in his unregenerate, under the sun sort of state. Yet because he's pointing to the cyclical nature of life, you die and you leave your inheritance to someone who's just going to spend it all or use it unwisely. Or maybe perhaps use it wisely and then they die and then somebody else ruins it.

Everything that you build in this world will over years of decay will eventually fall down. Right. So he notices these facts and he says, alas, all is vanity with the exception of having a faith-minded worldview.

Right. So under the sun, everything is only vanity. But above the sun, looking up to the highest of heavens, not everything's vanity because we have purpose in our life because we no longer live in what's called the perpetual now of the present state.

But we view time as linear, pointing towards ultimately Christ and his kingdom. Yes. And we see this in Ecclesiastes chapter three.

This is what we read this morning for service. It says in three verse 12 and onward, I perceive that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live. Also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.

This is God's gift to man. Right. So Solomon comes out of his stupor and his memoir of this nihilistic notion that everything is vain.

And he makes this confession that it is God's gift to man. So we ought to take pleasure in our toil. And ultimately, Solomon, who wrote Psalm 127, says, unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor, labor in vain.

So that's the point of Psalm of Ecclesiastes is that vanity surrounds every man except for the man of faith. Yes. Because in the Lord, we know that our labor is not in vain.

Amen. He gives us purpose. We eat perhaps the same exact meals as the pagan on a Sunday evening.

Yet the only thing that distinguishes us is that we pray beforehand and thank God for it. Yeah. So we still live life under the sun.

Yeah, it's by faith for us. So therefore it's not vain. Yeah, that's just beautiful.

I hope that gives you much, much hope. Don't just look to the days under the sun, but look forward to the days above the sun, right? Above the sun in the highest heavens with Christ seated with him. Yeah.

So I hope that was encouraging. Thanks for walking through that at the end there. So this is this is the doctrine of vocation.

We need to reclaim this in Christendom. OK. In the West, we need to reclaim this.

We need to be the kind of men and women that hone our craft as Christians. OK. And whatever, wherever that you might be called, even if you are a housewife, if you are a woman, that's called, you need to hone that craft.

OK. The arts of domesticity as a man, whatever your vocation is, whatever your work is, hone that craft of the glory of God by faith. So thanks for listening.

You check me out at for the king podcast.com. That's my website. And I have two social media. I have a Gav and a Twitter.

So check me out there for the King Pod. Thanks for listening, guys. I always end with a doxology in 1st Timothy 117 to the king of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, the honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Solely, dayo, glory. Glory.

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