

PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF WORK AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR NIGERIA YOUTHS' ATTITUDE TO WORK

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Abstract

Work is both socio-economic and spiritual activities that attest to the claim that humans are made in the image and likeness of God. God is the originator of work and he commands humanity to work. An individual's perception of the origin and essence of work therefore influences their attitude to work either as a creative engagement or burdensome activity. In recent times, the erosion of work ethics has opened a door to different attitudes to work such as laziness, incompetency, lack of thoroughness, gross dependency and illegalities. The recent surge in crime rates has been traced to a growing negative attitude to work among the youth. Obsession with quick money-making, disdain for creative labour and traditional vocations are obvious trends which have continued to breed criminalities across age groups this study aims to explore Paul's theology of work and its importance for youths' attitude to work. The study employed analytical method and biblical expository method which include analysis of primary and secondary data. The biblical texts were explored through contextual biblical approach. The study revealed that Paul's theology of work as human participation in God's creative work of creation and that work is a mean of self-sustainability and expression of human creativity. Paul's theology on work is therefore valuable in training and reshaping the mind of the youths about the purpose and dignity of labour. Thus, the study recommends that there should be integration of Paul's principles into various youth empowerment seminar and skill acquisition programs.

Key words: Work. Theology of work. Labour. Nigerian Youth. Attitude to work.

INTRODUCTION

Work as a concept has generated different perceptions from different angles. These perceptions reflect people's attitude to work which sees it either as virtue or vice. Many people regard work as something to be avoided and endured until the next opportunity for recreation. Others, however, hold that work was introduced before the fall and is not to be seen as an evil to contend with consequent the fall and human's rebellion against God. The Bible has much to say about work which in its different forms is mentioned more than 800 times, more than all the words used to express worship, music, praise, and singing. Peterson avers that the Bible begins with announcement on work, "In the beginning God created" He fashioned the heaven and earth. The week of creation was a work week. From the very beginning of the scriptures, it is very clear that God himself is a worker; a solid part of his character and nature. The opening chapters of Genesis provide a foundation for God's view of work, culture and man's responsibility.

In recent times, there has been widespread criticism on the general attitude to work of Nigeria youths. Nigerian youths have been described as lazy, slothful, indolent and lazybones who preferred magic wealth, dependence on others and lovers of fun than hard work. On April 18, 2018, in an event outside the country, former President Mohammadu Buhari described the Nigeria youth as lazy youths who depended on oil money. This allusion by the President does not represent the generality of the Nigeria youth. However, there are abundant evidence of some youths' engagement in illegal fast money-making deals such as internet fraud, money ritual, robbery and kidnapping among others. Also, some who engaged in legal labour exhibit wrong work ethics such as exploitation, altering of figures, theft, insubordination, disloyalty and incompetence. There is a breakdown in the disposition of many young people to work as they have come to see it as a curse rather than a blessing and a means to become blessed. Many contemporary youth have an unhealthy attitude to work in which work as perceived as toilsome as opposed to fun which is conceived as blissful.

There is an urgent need to put this unfortunate trend in check as quickly as possible because its long-term effect on socio-economic stability and security of lives and property can only be negative and disastrous.

Biblical Concept of Work

The Bible presents a deeper understanding of the origin and purpose of work which is beyond the need for a mere human survival. God Himself created work. There is, however, debate on how, when and why God introduced work to human beings. Some scholars like Earle, Kallas, and Harmon hold that work came only after the fall of Adam and Eve and was introduced only as penalty for their rebellion against God. If this view was endorsed, work would be seen as evil rather than a good to humanity. It is in this light that Harmon writes ‘many people regard work as something to be avoided and endured until the next opportunity for recreation. Others, however, hold that work was introduced before the fall and is not to be seen as an evil to contend with consequent on human beings’ fall and rebellion against God.

The biblical account presents two perceptions on the idea of work: negative and positive, good and bad, pleasing and tiring, the list goes on and on. This dual presentation is evidence in the New and Old Testament. Toryough affirms that this dual representation is made clear through the various biblical terms used in the Old and New Testaments to denote work either as a positive or negative enterprise. Therefore, one needs to conceptualize what are the biblical terms for works at these two representations.

For the positive terms, the first is *ma‘aseh* in the Old Testament and *εργον (ergon)* in the New Testament. All of these words are neutral just as the English word ‘work’. They denote ‘work’, ‘employment’ and ‘task’. Primarily, they refer to work that is easy and pleasant or enjoyable. This nuance would correspond to work as God intended it at the beginning of the universe.

Negatively, there are Hebrew and Greek terms employed by the Bible to denote work, which are translated as ‘toil’ or ‘labour’, implying that work is wearying, troublesome and unfulfilling; these words are *‘amal*, *κοπος (kopos)* and *πονος (ponos)*. The Old Testament word *‘amal*

means ‘labour’, ‘toil’, ‘anguish’, ‘troublesome work’, ‘trouble’ and ‘misery’. The word *work* occurs 55 times in later poetic and prophetic literature. Vine’s Dictionary identifies the word ‘*amal*’, with the following meanings: firstly, it means ‘labour’ in the sense of toil (Dt 26:7). Secondly, something gained by toil or labour is ‘*amal*’ (Ps 105:44). Thirdly, it refers to ‘troublesome’ work with a focus on the difficulty involved in a task or work as troublesome and burdensome (Eccl 1:3). Fourthly, the emphasis sometimes shifts to the area of trouble so that an enterprise or situation is exclusively troublesome or unfortunate (Gn 41:51). Lastly, ‘*amal*’ can have an ethical connotation and is used as a word for sin as in Ps.7:14.

Similarly, the New Testament word, *κοπος* primarily denotes ‘a striking or beating’. It also means to ‘toil’ resulting in weariness, laborious toil and trouble and is translated as labour or labours or weariness in various New Testament passages. The other word, *πονος* also denotes labour or toil (Col 4:13 & Rv 16:10 & 11).

In terms of the New Testament, one finds that it also teaches that work is ordained by God. Although we may not find specific passages that deal with the subject of the Christian approach to labour in general, we find passages that esteem work. For instance, Jesus viewed His own ministry as work (Jn. 4:34 and 1&:4). He also identified God as a working God in the statement, ‘My Father is still working, and I also am working’ (Jn 5:17). The incarnation of God as the Carpenter in Nazareth is the perfect fulfillment of the teaching that work is necessary and good. Besides, the New Testament does not draw a distinction between various kinds of work or occupation. As Guthrie observes:

there is no suggestion of contempt for manual work amongst the Greeks. Indeed, both Jesus and Paul were craftsmen, following the established tradition that males should learn a trade, even those destined to become rabbis.

The foregoing demonstrates that work has its origin in God. It also shows that work of all kinds is dignifying and that just as God himself works, human beings, created in his image and likeness, are created to work.

Origin of Work

The origin of work cannot be viewed independent of the creation story. The creation story gives a glimpse of where and how work began. John MacKay contends that it is important that when developing a Biblical theology of work, one pays attention to where it began which eventually colours the outcome of such theology.

Thus, he proposes three starting points:

Beginning in Genesis 3 emphasizes the difficulties that beset mankind because work now involves toil and frustration. Beginning in Genesis 2 brings out the fact that work is central to fulfilling our potential as human beings. We were created not merely to exist, but to be active. The divine mandate that we work predates the fall and is part of God's overarching programme for humanity. But it is only as we appreciate the significance of Genesis 1 that we arrive at a fully orbbed picture of what the Bible teaches about work. Here we find God portrayed as the divine worker.

Thematically, the core of theology of work and origin of work lies in the fact that God is a working God. This fact as contained in Genesis 1 and 2 reveals God as a working God from whom all work originates. The very first verse of the book (Gen 1:1) reports that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This is followed by the report that God took the next six days to furnish all the heavens and the earth with all their hosts. At the end of these creation activities, God rested on the seventh day from His work (Gen 2:2).

First, God was presented as a working God who created the constellation of heaven and the earth day after day. The Genesis account does not only reveal that God work but that he works within days which means he had a working day and resting day. Also, in Genesis 2 the continuation of God's work continues which sees him creating Man. "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7). The idea of 'formed' here has a close understanding with craftsmanship, skillful making, with intents, especially related to a potter's proficiency in shaping clay. Scripture does not hesitate to speak in this way of God functioning in such a fashion.

However, the forming of man was not without purpose which was revealed in the declaration of God within his heavenly court “let us make man in our own image and likeness” with the purpose that they may have dominion. The point here is that the making of man reveals that God wants a creature in his likeness and image (a working creature). Davis recognizes this when he writes that the character of work is shaped, first by the fact that human beings are made in God’s likeness with the capacity to participate actively in the wider creation. What this means is that as creatures made in God’s image and likeness, we take after him in this attribute of being workers. Thus, this participatory mandate was given to man in form of command and not just statement. It is in trying to make us conform to that image of God (i.e. of a working being), that God categorically charged human beings at the very beginning with the responsibility of working in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). Adam and Eve were instructed to till and keep the garden.

This is no exaggeration at all, as in both accounts of creation in Genesis God’s first word to humans has to do with work of some kind. In Genesis 1:28, humans were commanded to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth (NRSV). This is an enormous task or work, which involves humans in procreation (which is the continuity of the creation of humans on God’s behalf) and in serving as God’s stewards in the oversight and preservation of the other creatures of God. In Genesis 2:15, humans are commanded to till and keep the Garden of Eden, which is a command to work.

The mandate to work given to man by God was a mandate to participate in God’s nature. The mandates have a connotation of stewardship where man is given dominion, not a tyrannical one but an administrative role over the creation of God. Man is to see to the preservation and continuity of God’s creation. Therefore, the work given to man was to partner with the maker in his creation maintenance. Work, therefore, is the active participation of man in God’s creation affairs which include preservation and maintenance. Therefore, work did not start with man. It is an action that finds expression in the nature of God; ‘The Working God’. It is in the likeness and image that this communicable attribute of God was transferred unto man at creation and the

proof and test of this attributes was God requesting man to do likewise through the command in Gen 2:15-17.

Before the fall, working was a proof that he shares the nature of his creator and the proof that he is in partnership with his creator not just a means to keep psycho-somatic balance but also a means to keep a spiritual balance between his nature and the nature of God. Working for Adam before the fall was not only obedience to God but connection with his creator. Therefore, if work originated from the person and action of God and he sees the results of his own work as good, it follows that work is a good and a positive things, noble, worthy and godly. The statement in Genesis 1 ‘and God saw that it was good’ sounds like a litany which implies that God was proud of the resultant effect of his own work.

Youths’ Attitude to Work

Attitude is regarded as a mental or natural state of readiness, organized through someone’s experience, exerting a direct or dynamic influence on the individual’s response to all objects and situations to which it is related. Attitude is a mindset or a tendency to act in a particular way due to both an individual’s experience and temperament. Typically, when we refer to a person’s attitudes, we try to explain his or her behavior.

Attitudes are a complex combination of things such as personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations. Attitude helps us to define how we see situations as well as how we behave towards the situation. Basically, an attitude includes three components: an affective (a feeling), cognition (a thought or belief), and behavior (an action). It provides us with internal cognitions or beliefs and thoughts about people and objects. Although the feeling and belief components of attitudes are internal to a person, it can be viewed through individual resulting behavior. Attitudes are characterized by a predisposition or state of readiness to act or react in a particular way to certain stimuli; based on the understanding that they are relatively stable attitude of workers thus become very important to management in the discharge of their responsibilities and formulation of policies.

Attitudes to work are defined in terms of the necessary attitude needful for productivity. The right attitude to work includes integrity, self-discipline, teamwork, commitment and productivity. Some Nigerian youths have painted a rather negative picture of apathetic, uncommitted men and women, who are unresponsive to motivational techniques. They have often been described as indolent, apathetic and unresponsive to motivation and generally, not willing to put forth maximum or productive efforts. These negative attitudes to work are displayed in the form of various unwholesome attitudes to work ranging from sharp practices success in place of work, bribery, sexual extortion, lobbying for promotion, lateness, lack of accountability. Among some youths, work is considered a means of livelihood which is to be endured, a daily cyclic process carried out in a bad mood. When work becomes tiring, most workers consider working as a curse. This is often because of lack of conducive environment to work. The common slogan among youthful employee can be summarized in the social media short code; TGIF (Thank God is Friday) which mean many things to many youths. To some, it means an escape from the Monday to Friday working schedule, to some it may mean fun and partying time. The truth remains that most employees endure working from the Monday to Friday because they consider it an unavoidable source of livelihood.

In the same vein, it is not uncommon to find youths who consider work as a curse, an unpleasant experience to avoid. This negative disposition to work has been identified as the source of the current wave of abandonment of skills, certificate and entrepreneurship for ventures that brings quick money such as gambling, sport betting, prostitution, kidnapping, robbery, thuggery and fraud of different kinds. The quick money attitude is gradually displacing the dignity and value of labour among some youth today. This attitude to work has fostered the death of many innovative and creative minds leading to the crippling of entrepreneurship across affected youths.

Pauline Theology of Work

As far as the New Testament is concerned no one deals with the topic of work, etiquette of work and the relationship that subsists in work than Apostle Paul. While Paul's dealing of the

topic of work in his epistles does not include what kind of work is to be done by the believers, he did leave us with what necessary attitudes is necessary for a work to qualify as good work as well as a clear definition of the purpose of work. The extended discourse of Paul's theology on the subject of work comes from his letters to the Thessalonians where he addressed problem of idleness (idleness is one of the wrong dispositions to work). These letters, particularly the first, focus on work more than any other letters in the Pauline corpus, and in a far-from-incidental manner. There is evidence that Paul intends to make work one of the key threads in his argument. There have been different attempts to find the central theological hangout of Paul's theology of work. Some scholars suggest that the central theological block of Paul's theology on work is eschatology, while some conceived that it is motivated by ethics, the live in Christ after conversion in line with cultural norms of his day, while some opine that love is the centrality of Paul's theology of work.

Best proposes that the problem of idleness addressed in the letter to the Thessalonians was because of eschatological enthusiasm, a misguided expectation of the immediate return of Christ, which led to people abandoning their proper work, seeing no need to prepare for the future. The conceptual understanding of Best's position is that Paul addressed the problem of idleness because some belief the day of the Lord has come. It is true that Thessalonians have a tone of eschatology which is largely pronounced in the book however, the address of work goes beyond leaving work for eschatological reasons. Thus, eschatological enthusiasm cannot be considered as the underlining factor for the problem of idleness among the Thessalonica Christians.

Green asserts that Paul nowhere makes any particular connection between imminentist (those who believe Christ is coming soon as the next day) belief and the problem of idleness. Rather, Paul's argument against idleness is largely made on moral and missional grounds. If anything, it is more likely that eschatological carelessness contributes to the problem of idleness in Thessalonica than does eschatological enthusiasm. Therefore, the consideration of the topic of work by Paul was in the context of moral and missional ground. From Green's proposition, it is deducible that the topic of work in Paul's letter is a discussion on morality and in connection to

God. This study maintains that the topic of work cannot be divorced from the triad stand of eschatology, morality and sociology.

John Taylor maintains that at the center of Paul's theology of work is love. He proposes that Paul's theology of work within his two letters to the Thessalonians is within the confines of the triad of Faith, Hope and Love which he conceived formed the structure of the letters. Thus, work to Taylor is considered a 'labour of love' (Heb. 6:10). Therefore, Paul's main thrust is to picture work as an act of love. It is this address of Paul on work as tied to Christian conduct that is the concern of this study. The letter to the Thessalonians contains two triads which are interconnected and formed the heart of the Paul's theology of work; faith, hope and love; work, labour and endurance. This assertion of love is further buttressed by Taylor when he asserts that 'the point is that work, labor, and endurance are just as much Paul's focus in this document as the more lofty-sounding faith, love, and hope, which is confirmed later in the letter where Paul repeatedly returns to the topic of work in various ways.

How do these two triads (hope, faith and love; work, labour and endurance) connect to form the heart of Paul's theology of work? Scholarly opinions divide on the connection between the two triads and how it affects the construction of Pauline theology of work. The tussle of opinion has been on the phrase (τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος) ("Faithful work, and loving labor, and hopeful endurance," 1 Thess. 1:3) as indicating source or origin: work, labor, and endurance derive from faith, love, and hope. Fee takes "work of faith" as "probably Christian service," work directed towards Christ, and "labor of love" as "probably manual labor," work done in love for others.

Green takes "work of faith" as equivalent to "good works" towards all, whereas "labor of love" signifies strenuous action on behalf of other believers. Wanamaker sees "work of faith" as the "Christian lifestyle that distinguished [the Thessalonians] from the pagans," while their labor of love was possibly their acts of love towards other believers in Macedonia. While scholars try to make a distinction between work and labour on the premise of the triad, it becomes obvious that the Greek word for both work and labour in Paul's letter (ἔργον and κόπος), are synonymous and complementary. The word κόπος (labour) means labour of any kind that is done within any

time frame. This includes menial jobs, trades, and tent making which Paul himself engaged in and is visible to the Thessalonians during his stay with them. Therefore, there is a strict connection between, faith, hope and love with work, labour and endurance in Paul's theology of work.

Further, the heart of Paul's theology of works in allusion to him reiterating how he works with his hands among the people implies the dignity of work or labour. This reveals an important aspect of Paul's theology of work as follows. First, self-support is opposed to flattery, greed, and seeking financial rewards through gaining honor (1 Thess. 2:5–6).

Bruce explained the social construct of the world of Paul in the following lines: in a world trammled by self-seeking teachers of philosophy and clients sponging off patrons, in which love of money was pervasive work was for Paul the arena to live out and demonstrate his genuineness. Second, Paul saw no contradiction between his self-supporting labor and the preaching of the gospel. The phrase "working night and day" (1 Thess. 2:9) may be somewhat hyperbolic, but the genitive nouns indicate the kind of time when Paul was working, not the length of time.

The language of 2:9 means that his preaching was contemporaneous with his work; it was the arena for his proclamation of the good news. His customers, suppliers, market neighbours, and even perhaps fellow guild members, would have provided a steady stream of potential converts some at least of the recipients of the letter were the "you" whom Paul evangelized while working. Third, Paul explains that the motive of his self-support was to avoid being a financial burden to anyone. The three condition outlines show that working for Paul was motivated by love for his audience. His self-support was a means to relieve his audience the burden of his subsistence which could have been placed on them in the name of hospitality. Therefore, work or labour is not to be motivated by selfishness; the desire to attain financial freedom to dominate and oppress others, rather an act of love and service to others.

It is obvious that Paul's theology of work is built around the exhortation to work as an act of love, for one another and for all, and this should be seen as instruction to the church to work to be self-supporting, in the manner of Paul who was not a burden on others. This is confirmed

by the clause in 2Thess 3:12: “that you should have no need of anyone”. Love for all (men) meant maintaining the credible witness of their lifestyle. Through self-supporting work believers will live in a seemly manner before outsiders. There is evidence of public disdain for those who begged, or those clients who relied on rich patrons for their food, visiting them every morning for a formal greeting, and to receive handouts of food or money.

Second Thessalonians 3:6, warn against being busybodies, it seems that there were some who were causing trouble in the city, having the leisure to do so, either because they were supported by wealthy patrons, or perhaps because the church was supporting them. Paul told them to look after their own affairs. Paul also insisted that they work with their hands. Also, central to Paul’s theology of work is that the act of eating (which implies feeding) is a factor of work. This was clearly stated in his command to the Thessalonians when he asserts in form of command: ‘If they are not willing to work they should not eat (2Thess. 3:10). Paul notches the dignity of work as noble and something that brought honour when he admonished the people to honour those leaders who work over them. Although, in this context the work maybe the communication of the Gospel or pastoral ministry. The charge that people should mind their businesses and not be idle in connection with this shows that Paul conceived of work as not only noble but also what brings honour.

Paul’s theology of work centers on love, faith, and hope. He conceives work in relation to Christian experience and lifestyle which must be motivated by love and the desire to earn financial freedom so has not to be a burden to others. Therefore, being a busybody and living in idleness are clearly frowned at. It is obvious that Paul tries to tie working to Christian lifestyle which is virtuous and honourable. Having considered a construct of Pauline theology of work, it is expedient that this study also considers the significance of his theology for youths in modern times.

Importance of Paul's Theology of Works to Youth

Paul's theology of work has a directional importance to the Youth. One of the leading problems facing young people is the problem of employment and unfavourable environment for creativity and self-employment. Youth unemployment is a consequence of the overall unemployment climate within an economy. It often arises from an oversupply of young graduates, school leavers, and other unemployed youth, which exceeds the demand for labor in a sluggish or weak job market.

Paul's theology of work speaks to this current challenge of work among youth. First, work is a human responsibility. It is an obligation and a means of survival. The importance of work as a means of provision is stressed in the Bible. Adam is given work by God (Gen 2:15), and working six days a week from morning to evening is assumed in the Old Testament (Deut. 5:13; Ps 104:23). In the book of Proverbs (6:6-11 and 24:30-34), the importance of work as a means of making provision for the future is stressed. Jesus worked as a carpenter (Mk 6:3) and Paul as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). Members of the early church are encouraged to take responsibility for their own welfare (1 Thess 4:10- 12). By providing for their own livelihood, says Peschke such people guarantee "their independence and personal freedom". In 2 Thess 3:7-10, Paul uses his own example to stress the importance of providing for one's needs and not being a burden on others because of idleness:

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labour we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you ... we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat (2 Thess 3:7-10).

While Paul did not say which work people should do, he employed his skills as a tanner. All work is acceptable as long as it is legitimate, and they do not bring harm to others. But we also know that individuals may be willing to work but be unable to find work due to their lack of skills or the fact there are not enough jobs to meet the needs of an ever-growing population. Larger macro-economic issues, such as the global recession and increased mechanization in the

workplace, also play a significant role in the growth or reduction of employment opportunities. Therefore, the youth must know that it is their responsibility to work, and not be a burden to anyone. This shows that the act of working is tied to being responsible. The ability to provide for one's needs in a legitimate way has always been one among many standards of defining a responsible youth.

Secondly, the youth need to work not only to survive but also to provide for the needs of others, especially their families: And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:3-8). Here, it is stated that the work of parents is to care for their offspring, for instance, to provide for their material needs. Also vital is the role of parents which is to facilitate the full intellectual, physical, spiritual, social and moral development of their children – all of which are crucial for family life and social wellbeing. The ethical obligations of loving one's neighbour and serving others are completely contrary to greed or avarice. Avarice is the relentless desire to accumulate beyond what can realistically be required for human need at the expense of the needs of others and the environment. As a result, instead of being exposed and repudiated, waste, gluttony, avarice and corruption are all too often admired and perpetuated. This self-aggrandizement is in marked contrast to Christian economic values that include a commitment to the common good, solidarity with others, concern for the poor, and the integrity of creation.

Freedom and responsibility need to be combined. According to Nürnberger, what is needed is a,

... responsible society, a society that is aware of its embeddedness in the greater network on natural relationships; a society that uses its freedom to construct an equitable and sustainable system; a society in which all citizens have a chance to contribute and benefit equitably; a society where all participants are willing to pull their weight in the productive and administrative processes and to sacrifice for the common good.

Also, work is an expression of creativity. The reposition of work as an expression of creativity shows that young people have more than enough creative prowess to fashion out different kind of works within their education and social advantage and is able to take care of

their economic needs. The implication of Paul's theology of work is that part of who we are as human beings is to be creators of something. Whether we create works of art, music or literature, raise healthy and happy children, start businesses or agricultural ventures, or construct new buildings, it is important to who we are. Human beings are not simply machines or cogs in a wheel. In this regard, work that crushes human dignity and fails to develop skill, competence and responsibility cannot be good work. Therefore, what makes good work must take the following into consideration.

First, work is good when employment conditions and wages are fair, and provision is made for human needs in a way that enables the thriving of others and the natural world – a balance between profit, people, and the planet. Second, good work is performed when human beings, as individuals and communities, refrain from pursuing only self-interest and work together to serve others in their own society and across the globe. Christian and African ethics teach that a selfish life is not a truly human life at all. Third, work is good when it is an expression of our human creativity. This creativity is the rich blooming of human capacity that brings beauty and hope to our world and results in innovative and wise solutions to the many problems that beset us. Fourth, a sense of being called and gifted by God to contribute to the lives of others. The appreciation, protection, and wise use of all of creation is an expression of good work. Dedicated and honest work is vital on a continent marred by selfish and short-sighted materialism and patronage. A materialist worldview cannot explain moral conscience, motivate commitment to others except in terms of the “survival of the species”, or sustain a sense of ultimate accountability.

Conclusion

Paul's theology of work underscores the spiritual and social dimensions of the purpose of work, and it treats succinctly the dignity of labour. All noble work is seen as good and rewarding. Paul's theology frowns at laziness or dependency. It shows the importance of work to believers. Work is one of the true tests of the image and likeness of God in man, that God created man to work, and he tested him by giving him work role shows that God is interested in man's work.

This is why Paul says, servants should work as working unto the Lord'. Thus, all legal and noble work is to be seen as working unto and working for the Lord. Working is an active way humanity partner with God in his creation and on earth. To avoid work or to have wrong disposition towards work means to insult or neglect the image and likeness of God in man.

For humans, work has sociological values. All human labour has a social impact on their immediate society. Paul encourages believers to work so that they can have something to give. Work must be seen as humanitarian service through which one is able to touch lives and contribute meaningfully to the wellbeing of others. Apart from the fact that work dignifies men, it a sociological element of creating value and being valuable. However, many forces today hamper or influence the disposition of youths to work, which cripples the desire for creative and explorative labour among youths. The hype from social media for entertainment, leisure and quick-money schemes are high contributing factors to wrong disposition to work among some youths. Paul's instruction on work and positive attitude to work is applicable to Nigerian youths. Work and working is active participation and qualification for social recognition and a means of contributing to the ongoing preservation of life and God's creation.

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