

## ARE YOU HONORING GOD AT WORK?

*6* <sup>5</sup>*Servants, obey your [earthly] masters with respect and fear in the sincerity of your heart as though you were serving Christ; <sup>6</sup>not [merely] for the sake of appearance as those who seek to please men, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. <sup>7</sup>Render your service with good will, as doing it for the Lord, not for men; <sup>8</sup>knowing that each one will be paid back by the Lord for whatever good he does—whether slave or free man. <sup>9</sup>And masters, treat them in the same way, and stop threatening [them]; knowing both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (Eph. 6:5-9)*

*3* <sup>22</sup>*Servants, obey your [earthly] masters in all things; not [merely] for the sake of appearance as those who seek to please men, but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work with all your heart, as doing it for the Lord and not for men; <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the compensation that is the inheritance. You are serving Christ the Master. <sup>25</sup>The one who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism. **4** Masters, treat your servants with justice and equality, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. (Col 3:22-4:1)*

### **Introduction**

Does the name “Stradivarius” mean anything to you?

The name “Stradivarius” is synonymous with fine violins. Antonius Stradivarius insisted that no violin constructed in his shop be sold until it was as near perfection as human care and skill could make it.

Why did Stradivarius hold himself and his employees to such a high standard of excellence? Was he interested in satisfied customers who would buy again? Was he interested in making a name for himself? No. Antonius Stradivarius was interested in the glory of God. He observed: God needs violins to send His music into the world; and if violins are defective, God’s music will be spoiled. (*Our Daily Bread*, 1/25/93)

Like Antonius Stradivarius, we are to be concerned to glorify God—not only in church, but also on the job. Are you honoring God at work? Let us consider how we are to do so as employees and as employers.

### **I. Employees, Honor God, ...by Doing a Good Job for Christ (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25)**

The command of Scripture is, Christian employee, “*obey*” your employer, your foreman, and your supervisor. Do the job assigned you, do what you are told to do—the one exception being an order that causes you to violate God’s commandments, (such as being told by your boss to lie to customers or steal a competitor’s trade secrets.) What about working on the Lord’s Day? As a

Christian, at the very least you should request if at all possible to have the day off as a day of worship, and you should refuse overtime work if it is offered on the Lord's Day.

The Christian employee is commanded, "*obey your [earthly] masters* [your employers] *with respect and fear* [or, "*reverence*"]." The Christian employee must not harbor an attitude of defiance, resentment or resistance; rather, he is to recognize that the authority his supervisor exercises over him is part of the structure of authority instituted by God. Consequently, he is to respect and reverence that authority, recognizing its divine origin and sanction.

Christian employee, serve your employer in the "*sincerity of your heart.*" The Christian employee must not merely go through the motions of work; rather, put he must put his heart into his work—doing the best he can, give it his best effort. The Christian employee is not to merely render service "*for the sake of appearance as those who seek to please men.*" That is to say, he must not merely put on a show of hard and diligent work when the boss is around, he must not just try to impress him; rather, he is called to do his best, to give his all to the job, even when the boss is not looking over his shoulder. The Christian employee is to do "*the will of God from the heart.*" He is to recognize that it is by God's providence that he is presently in the situation in which he finds himself, and, consequently, he is to give his best effort for Jesus' sake.

Christian employee, serve your employer with a spirit of "*good will.*" We must bear in mind Matthew 7:12 and apply it to our present work situation, as opposed to laboring under a spirit of defiance or despair: "*In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*" We must also take note of Titus 2:9-10,

*Teach servants to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, <sup>10</sup>and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. (Titus 2:9-10)*

Some would seek to justify stealing, (be it the theft of materials or the stealing of time by lack of performance,) as a way of compensating for low wages or poor working conditions. But consider what it says in Ephesians 6:8, "*each one will be paid back by the Lord for whatever good he does.*"

Christian employee, view your service to your employer as a part of your service to Christ. Note verse 5, "*Servants, obey your [earthly] masters ... as though you were serving Christ,*" verse 6, "*as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,*" and verse 7, "*Render your service with good will, as doing it for the Lord.*" Also take into account Colossians 3:23-24, "*Whatever you do, work with all your heart ... You are serving Christ the Master.*" This full and spiritual perspective on life lifts our work out of the realm of hopeless drudgery and elevates it to the

position of sacred service offered to Christ. If Christ came to you and gave you an assignment, (“I want you to build a house for Me; ... type a letter for Me; ... bake a loaf of bread for Me”), how would you feel? How would you approach the task? View your present job for what it truly is, namely, your assignment from Christ. Now, how is that going to affect the way you do your work?

Christian employee, remember that you will receive your just reward (your worthy wages and a lot more) from Christ. The Lord sees all that you do for Him, the more menial the task the greater is His appreciation, and He is faithful to reward you. In this regard, consider 1 Corinthians 4:5b, “[*The Lord*] will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and will reveal the intentions of the hearts, and then each one shall receive from God the praise [he deserves].” In this passage, “*the things hidden in darkness*” is referring to the good deeds done for Jesus that have gone unnoticed or unappreciated in the world and in the church. This is evident from the fact that when these deeds are brought to light, they receive praise from God. This would certainly not be the case if the reference were to deeds of sin. Note, too, that this passage indicates the Lord will not only reward the deeds done for Him, but will also reward the desires to render service, desires that, due to the providence of God, were never able to be carried out, such is the meaning of the statement, “*the intentions of the heart.*”

As a means of incentive and encouragement, let us take Matthew 25:21 and always keep it before us as we engage in our everyday labors: “*His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in the joy of your lord!’*”

## **II. Employers, Honor God, ...by Showing Respect for Your Employees for Jesus’ Sake (Eph. 6:9)**

In verse 9 the Christian employer is exhorted, “*treat them* [i.e.; your employees] *in the same way.*” Christian employers are to treat their workers with the same spirit of sincerity and devotion that God requires the employees to exhibit towards their supervisors and bosses (vs. 5-6.) The Christian employer is to be honest with his employees; he should be concerned for their well being on the job and as individuals who have lives beyond their job. The Christian employer also must remember Matthew 7:12, “*In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*” Christian employers are to treat their workers with the same spirit of good will that God requires the employees to exhibit towards their supervisors and bosses (vs. 7.)

Christian employers must seriously take into consideration Colossians 4:1, “*Masters, treat your servants with justice and equality, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.*” The Christian employer is exhorted to do what is just—that would include such things as just wages, honorable treatment, safe and pleasant working conditions, reasonable time requirements, taking into consideration the employee’s family obligations. The Christian employer is exhorted to do what is

fair—this means treating his employees equally and without favoritism in pay or job assignment or job expectation in such areas as timeliness, job performance, etc. The Christian employer must seriously taken into account the warning issued by the Apostle James,

*Behold! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.* (Jas. 5:4-5)

The Christian employer must not use his workers as a means of gaining for himself a share of “the good life” at their expense: getting the most out of them, giving the least to them, so that the employer may become rich without any concern for his workers or just compensation for their labor. The following account is an example to avoid: Pat McDonald had worked in a shoe factory in Manchester, New Hampshire, for forty-two years in an age when there were no pensions or vacations. In his last year he was called in by his boss and told, “Pat, I think you’ve outlived your usefulness to us. We think we’ve had your best years. I’m afraid we don’t need you here anymore.” (*The Fifties*, David Halberstam, p. 156)

Christian employer, remember that your present position, likewise, has been assigned to you by Christ the Lord, just as He has seen fit to assign your employees’ position to them. You are to fulfill your role of employer to the glory of God and in service to Christ. You are to fulfill your role of authority in a manner that is worthy of Christ and reflects the way Christ graciously and righteously employs His God-given authority. Note verse 9b issues the command, “*stop threatening;*” i.e., don’t brow-beat your workers, don’t bully them; don’t take out your frustrations on them; don’t derive a sadistic pleasure out of wielding power over them and subjugating them to your authority and your will. Such an attitude is demonic; it certainly is not Christ-like.

Christian employer, remember that you are accountable to Christ. Both you and your workers have a common Master who is in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is no respecter of persons—he shows no favoritism. Both you and your workers stand on an equal footing before Him; He will judge all men on the basis of divine justice and equity. Therefore, employer, carry out your assignment of management in a manner that is worthy of the name of Christ, doing so with the kindness, compassion and righteousness that is characteristic of Christ. Carry out your God-given assignment of management in such a manner that you have nothing to fear on the day of final accounting, but can likewise look forward to a divine commendation and reward.

Christian employer, glorify God by showing concern for your employees.

## **Conclusion**

As a Christian, are you honoring God in the workplace? As a Christian employee, are you honoring God by doing a good job for Jesus' sake? As a Christian employer, are you honoring God by showing respect for your employees for Jesus' sake?