Articles by Gordon L. Wakefield

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The Christian and His Employer (Oct 1963)

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"…That They May Adorn the Doctrine of God…."

It may startle some Christians to be told that it pleases God more for a Christian employee to give himself wholeheartedly to sweeping floors, delivering mail, teaching, serving customers, painting, etc., than to "give a testimony" for Christ on the employer's time.

In the writer's twelve years as a Christian and in association with the assemblies of brethren, he has heard the subject of a Christian's relationship to his employer taught only once, and this was at a conference for young people (a very appropriate place to teach it, I might add, but not the only place). My own experience in talking with believers about their jobs (government service, private enterprise, military service or whatever) and in listening to casual comments about such has shown that we could well profit by much teaching and repeated exhortation on the subject.

The Word of God says: "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:9, 10). "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because

they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort" (1 Tim. 6:1, 2). "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh; with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye service, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. 6:5-8). "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God; And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons" (Col. 3:22-25). "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter. 2:18-20).

These verses teach us these precepts:

Christian employees should give honour to their employers so God's name and doctrine will not be evil spoken of.

Christian employees should not "use" Christian employers for their own ends or otherwise take

advantage of the fact they are brothers, but rather they should seek ways to serve them (1 Tim. 6:1, 2).

Christians should work heartily for their employers as giving service to Christ, realizing there are fearful consequences for not doing so and blessed rewards for faithful and honest service (Eph. 6:3-8 and Col. 3:22-25).

Christians are to accept orders and criticism from their employers, and they are not privately or slyly to “take out” their injured feelings, real or imagined, on their bosses in such a way as to injure them or their businesses (Titus 2:8, 9 and 1 Peter 2:18-21).

Christians are to react to their employers according to these precepts whether the employer is “good and gentle” or “crooked and perverse” (froward) (1 Pet. 2:18).

I believe that in the matter of a Christian’s relationship to his employer there is a basic problem involved, one which was brought to my attention through a personal experience a few years ago. A Christian brother who was just starting out to establish his own home moved from employment to employment in a matter of a few months. He communicated with me a great deal about each of his successive jobs, and it appeared he consistently had nothing but criticism for each employer. He would complain that his employer was not a believer, and this fact apparently opened the way for no end of critical abuse.

It finally became clear to me (and this was confirmed later when I openly discussed the subject with him) that this brother had never had the experience of trusting the Lord to provide suitable employment, and therefore he had never had the conviction, and consequent peace,

that he was in the job the Lord wanted him to have. As a result, every disagreeable aspect of a job was experienced as a thorn in the flesh rather than as a God-sent lesson in Christian maturing.

The first step, then, in obeying the injunctions in the cited passages, would be to seek and know the mind of God in taking up employment. A believer can know where God wants him to work. The Christian should be bold in "putting out the fleece." God will be clear in opening and closing doors. My own experience has been that God frequently leads in such matters by closing all doors but one. (1 Cor. 7:20 might well be considered at this point.)

"… that the name of God…be not blasphemed."

It is expected that every believer will have a testimony for Christ among those who know him. Therefore, all he says and does reflects upon his God. What a solemn responsibility! Make no mistake about it, the unsaved, whether religious or not, expect a high standard of conduct from those who claim to be Christians. It seems the worldling very often, though without real discernment, sees the practical aspects of Christianity in a way many real believers never do. Parents are usually very concerned that their children conduct themselves in a way that will reflect well upon the family name. How great should be the Christian's concern that he earn respect and praise for his heavenly Father's name!

Christian employees frequently take advantage of employers who are also believers. A Christian in business is expected to give an account of his stewardship to his Master, God. Because a Christian employs several, or only, Christians, he should not be

expected to indulge in unsound business practices in order to “favour” his brothers in Christ who work for him. Rather, believers who work for believing employers should be even more concerned to render honest labour because they are doubly partakers of the benefit. They benefit from a prosperous business and from the Lord,

It is not for one Christian, such as myself, to dictate to another how he handles himself on his employers time. The Word of God does that by precept. However, each individual Christian should be much exercised that he give his employer the service that is expected in return for wages receivd. And may I suggest that a Christian give a little more than is expected. Many unsaved are scrupulous about giving due return for wages received; but few, if any, are willing to give more.

Life in Christ is exceedingly practical. Christians have yet to demonstrate this in a very convincing way to the world,.

A very wicked philosophy has crept into our civilization, and it has insidiously worked its way into the lives of many Christians. This is a philosophy of not expecting or giving one’s money’s worth in business dealings. We expect that everyone along the line of free enterprise will get more than he should in profit. We don’t expect to get our money’s worth in service. Consequently, we, as employees, don’t expect to give our employer his money’s worth. Yes, this treacherous attitude has worked its way into the subconscious behaviour of Christians. This is why we are to “teach and exhort” one another about this very practical area of our lives as believers.

This matter of not giving true service to one's employer is particularly a problem when an employee is not directly responsible to or in direct contact with his employer, as in a large corporation or when there are intermediary supervisors or foremen, This is likewise true when the source of the salary is something as ill-defined and remote as "the government" or "the public." Christians are no less responsible in such circumstances.

I am a public school teacher. Between me and the public, which furnishes my salary, are several "overseers"; a department head, a vice-principal, a principal, a curriculum director, a superintendent, and a school board. Insofar as I am responsible to these individuals, I am to give honest service and honour. And this I am to do whether or not I happen to like them or feel I can honestly respect them. I cannot excuse myself for any laxness here by taking the attitude that I really owe my service and honour to the "public," which has no real "soul" or "personality," and therefore I am relieved of any real responsibility.

Since the fall of man it has been God's design that man should labour for his livelihood. It is the lot of most humans to be employed by someone else. (There are precepts in the Scriptures for those Christians who are self-employed or who employ others, but such are not our subject now.) God knows this and understands; and He has, as a result, given us specific precepts to guide us in giving a very practical testimony to the world. When an employee is consistenly early for work, cheerful in his responsibilities, gives extra measure of service and is seeking ways to prosper his employer's business, the employer cannot help but be aware that

something very unusual is motivating his employee. And when God presents the opportunity for a spoken witness, how much more ready will be the audience and how much greater will be the weight of the words. And what if God never gives such an opportunity for spoken witness? We have been obedient children.

Too many Christians, it seems, have a “persecution complex” concerning their treatment by neighbours, associates, employers, etc. They feel that one is bound to lose out if he “lives up to his Christian principles.” We need to be certain first of all that the principles we are living up to are found in the Word of God. Then we need to remind ourselves that, “when a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7).

First Give—Then Live (Oct 1964)

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But I haven't had any money to give to the Lord's work for sometime now, and I don't see how I will have for sometime to come!!!

If it is startling that a Christian should have feelings such as stated above, then it is all the more surprising that he should say such to a fellow believer; and, yet, just such a statement was made recently to the writer. Does it seem conceivable that the person who made this statement has had an experience with the One who said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33)? Yes, it is conceivable, but isn't it sad? One cannot help but wonder, how vital was that experience!

I have read numerous articles concerning the Christian's giving to the work of the Lord. Many of these have dealt with the applicability of the tithe to the true Church of Christ. Some have dealt with the sphere of the Christian's giving by discussing whether or not he should limit himself to giving only to and through the local church, or whether or not he should consider and support more general needs, or even reply to the most sensational appeals. All facets of giving to the work of the Lord should be reviewed, but isn't there a far more basic issue to this matter? I believe that there is, and that it is found in the Scripture quoted earlier.

The background to Christ's statement in Matthew 6:33, is that of the widow who cast all she had, even her

whole living, into the treasury. There are cynics even among believers who say that she really had nothing to lose. Her “whole living” was so meagre it wouldn’t have been much use to her had she kept it, or even a part of it. Both of these thoughts are profoundly true, but let us be quick to apply them to ourselves. What good, from Eternity’s perspective, will anything we withhold do us? Furthermore, we certainly have nothing to lose in giving our whole living, if it be given in that same attitude that was praised by the Saviour.

Just what do you make of Christ’s words, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”? Do you believe this to be a statement of fact and a promise to be capitalized by all Christians, even you? Do you dare to minimize these words of your Saviour? You cannot do so with impunity, for the Spirit of God says, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Which is safer and more pleasing to the Lord, a Christian who is depending on his own frugality, the fickleness of an unsaved employer and an unstable economy, or a Christian who treats his income as an opportunity for seeking first the Kingdom of God, and who trusts God who gave His Son to freely supply all things needful in Him (including all expected and unexpected expenses)? See Romans 8:32.

Someone has suggested that the Christian who tries to plan for all his needs (putting aside all question of wants) sets for himself the impossible task of foretelling

accurately all future emergencies. Certainly, God expects all His children to be careful stewards concerning their responsibilities and obligations (1 Cor. 14:40). Notwithstanding, what right has a Christian to incur obligations that will so restrict him financially that all his income goes to his creditors and none of it goes to the Lord? Surely, many of the things considered as necessities by the unsaved are luxuries to the Christian and a sin to possess in the light of Matthew 6:33.

Mr. Thomas Baird, in a book entitled Back to the Beginning published in 1919, said, “If every Christian in our assemblies would dedicate one-tenth of his income to God, the missionary problem as far as finances is concerned would be solved in the twinkling of an eye. 1 Corinthians 16:2, condenses the whole subject into a nutshell: Who should give? “Everyone of you.” When to give? “The first day of the week.” How to give? “As God hath prospered.” Surely if the Law could extract one tenth from the tight purse of a Jew, is it asking too much for grace to demand one tenth from the income of a Child of God? Let not a Jew put a Christian to shame” (pp. 78-79 op cit).

We have strayed from our main point for it is not the amount but the attitude we are concerned with. Someone has suggested that those who argue against the tenth, saying that it is giving preference to the Law, overlook the fact that Melchisedek predates the giving of the Law, and he received a tenth from Abraham. Usually those who thus speak are looking for an excuse to give less not more.

An unconverted dentist friend has learned the simple fact that all Christians ought to learn. He asserts that

both he and his wife have discovered that when they write a cheque for their church offering before they make the weekly budget, they never miss the amount (They are actually thinking of increasing the amount). When they made out their budget first, they found that there was none for their offering. If the unregenerate who have no one but their clients to rely upon can learn this lesson, why not believers? Believers should for they have an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving heavenly Father upon whom to lean. Speaking from personal experience, an experience that has been a genuine blessing, which I would covet for all, God has enabled me to increase my giving without a sizeable increase in income. He has graciously through the years trimmed the list of necessities by lessening the desire for certain things and enlarging the capacity for spiritual things which enables me to properly seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

As I draw this article to a close, may three principles be suggested: if we do not give first, we are not seeking primarily the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. If we do not give first, we cannot confidently expect that “all these things will be added unto you.” If we do give first, we can give more and really exercise faith for the regular requirements of life and for every emergency.