

Subject: *Glorifying God in Our Work*

Scripture: *1 Timothy 6:1-2*

The Christian faith touches every area of life. Our relationship with Christ affects our family life and our work life. What we believe has a direct impact on how we live at home and how we live at work. The distinction that is often made between sacred work and secular work does not exist. In reality all work is sacred.

According to one survey, 70 percent of Americans don't like their jobs. Of those 70 percent, 90 percent said they didn't want to get up and go to work. The average person would rather enjoy a life of idle comfort and recreation. The main reason people go to work is they have to pay their bills, like the words to a bumper sticker: "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." Some of those unhappy workers are Christians who need to know what the Bible says about work and our responsibility as Christian employees.

The great Reformers reminded their generation that everything in life was to be done for God's glory. There is no such thing as religious work and secular work. This was also a guiding principle of the Puritans including the Pilgrim forefathers of our country.

Paul wrote to Timothy about this topic. Some of those Christians were not only workers, but slaves, and Paul reminded them that they could glorify God through their work. He addresses the subject from two angles. First, he writes about a Christian slave serving a non-Christian master, and then he writes about a Christian slave serving a Christian master. The application can be made to us as working for a non-Christian or a Christian boss.

WORKING FOR A NON-CHRISTIAN BOSS (vs. 1)

- The relationship of a slave and his master (employee and boss)

Slavery was a large part of the ancient world. The whole economy of the Roman Empire depended on slaves. These slaves were not hired hands treated as prisoners, but were in many cases treated as family members. Although some slaves did hard manual work, others served as cooks, housekeepers, business managers, and teachers in the home. Slaves took on that role for various reasons. Some were prisoners of war. Some were purchased in the slave market. Some people sold themselves into slavery, and some were sold to pay off debts. Some slaves were gifts or inherited from their family, and other slaves were born into slavery. It was not all oppressive and evil. It was for some slaves a good way of life. This wasn't a bad system, but like anything else, there was some abuse and that was due to the sinful hearts of slave owners and not the system itself. The same is true of businesses and bosses today. Some are abusive and unreasonable, but many are kind and good.

The Old Testament did not forbid slavery, but protected the rights of slaves. Jewish slaves could not be held for longer than six years unless they volunteered to stay longer with their masters. Slaves who were abused by their master were set free.

In New Testament times Jewish slaves were also protected. They were to be treated as equal to the eldest son in a family. In fact, they were treated so well that there was an old Jewish saying: "Whoever buys a Jewish slave buys himself a master." Gentile slaves were not treated as well, but at least they had food, clothing, and shelter along with a small salary. The phrase "under the yoke" does not imply harsh working conditions or abuse, but was used as an expression to mean under someone's authority. Even Jesus used this expression in His

loving invitation, **Matthew 11:29** *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* The word “servants” can be translated slaves. The word describes someone who submits under the authority of another person, and it is the same word used of those who serve Christ as Lord.

- The responsibility for a slave (employee) to respect his master (boss)

Christian slaves were to regard their non-Christian masters as worthy of all honor. This is a respect for them regardless of feelings. Paul has already said that true widows are worthy of honor (5:3) and faithful pastors are worthy of honor (5:17). Masters (bosses) are to be respected and honored, even those who are unfair, demanding, and harsh. **1 Peter 2:18-20**
¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward (harsh). ¹⁹ For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ 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.

- The reason for a slave (employee) to respect his master (boss)

The reason for a slave to respect his master is so that God’s name and his doctrine (teaching) are not blasphemed, but they will be glorified. Lenski commented: “If a Christian slave dishonored his master in any way by disobedience, by acting disrespectfully, by speaking shamefully of his master, the worst consequence would not be the beating he would receive but the curses he would cause his master to hurl at the miserable slave’s God.”

Paul wrote along the same line in **Titus 2:9-10**⁹ *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again (argumentative); ¹⁰ Not purloining (pilfering, stealing), but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.* The reason for a slave or employee to respect and serve faithfully is to make the teaching attractive that God saves sinners by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The grace of God is life-changing.

WORKING FOR A CHRISTIAN BOSS (vs. 2)

The temptation for a slave (employee) who had a Christian master (boss) would be to slack off or expect special treatment because of their relationship in Christ. Even though Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:28** *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* This does not mean these distinctions do not exist in spite of spiritual equality. The word in verse 2, “let them not despise them” means to think down or undervalue their authority. The servant (employee) must have a submissive attitude and respect for his master (boss). How much more should a believer show respect for a Christian boss who is faithful and beloved?

In two other important passages Paul gives instructions for all Christian employees:

Ephesians 6:5-8⁵ *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; ⁶ Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: ⁸ Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

Colossians 3:22-24²² *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:*²³ *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;*²⁴ *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

Here is a summary of seven things we must do to glorify God in our work:

- Believers should work obediently
- Believers should work respectfully
- Believers should work eagerly
- Believers should work reverently (as unto Christ)
- Believers should work consistently
- Believers should work diligently
- Believers should work expectantly

1 Corinthians 10:31 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*