

A.W. Pink:

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Part 3: Authority in Christian Practice

Chapter 12

CHRISTIAN EMPLOYEES

How intensely practical is the Bible! It not only reveals to us the way to Heaven, but it is also full of instruction concerning how we are to live here upon earth. God has given His Word unto us to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path: that is, for the regulating of our daily walk. It makes known how God requires us to conduct ourselves in all the varied relations of life. Some of us are single, others married; some are children, others parents; some are masters, others servants. Scripture supplies definite precepts and rules, motives and encouragements for each alike. It not only teaches us how we are to behave in the church and in the home, hut equally so in the workshop and in the kitchen, supplying necessary exhortations to both employers and employees—clear proof God has not designed that all men should be equal, and sure index that neither "Socialism" nor "Communism" will ever universally prevail. Since a considerable portion of most of our lives be spent in service, it is both for our good and God's glory that we heed those exhortations.

A secular writer recently pointed out that "work has increasingly come to be regarded as a distasteful means to the achievement of leisure, instead of leisure as a recuperative measure to refit us for work." That is a very mild way of saying that the present generation is pleasure mad and hates any kind of real work. Various explanations have been advanced to account for this: such as the ousting of craftsmanship by machinery, the fear of unemployment discouraging zeal, the doles, allowances and reliefs which are available for those who don't and won't work. Though each of those has been a contributing factor, yet there is a more fundamental and solemn cause of this social disease, namely, the loss of those moral convictions which formerly marked a large proportion of church-goers, who made conscience of serving the Lord while engaged in secular activities, and who were actuated by the principles of honesty and integrity, fidelity and loyalty.

Nowhere has the hollowness of professing Christians been more apparent, during the last two or three generations, than at this point. Nowhere has more reproach been brought upon the cause of Christ than by the majority of those employees who bore His name. Whether it be in the factory, the mine, the office, or in the fields, one who claims to be a follower of the Lord Jesus should stand out unmistakably from his fellow employees who make no profession. His punctuality, his truthfulness, his conscientiousness, the quality of his work, his devotion to his employer's interests, ought to be so apparent that there is no need for him to let others know by his lips that he is a disciple of Christ. There should be such a marked absence of that slackness, carelessness, selfishness, greed and insolence which mark the majority of the ungodly, that all may see he is motivated and regulated by higher principles than they are. But, if his conduct belies his profession, then his companions are confirmed in their opinion that "there is nothing in religion but talk."

Nor does the whole of the blame rest upon them: the pulpit is far from being guiltless in this matter. The Lord has expressly bidden His servants to preach thereon, as being a subject of great importance and an essential part of that doctrine which is according to godliness. "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 believing and beloved, partakers of the benefit: these things teach and exhort" (1 Tim. 6:1, 2). But where is the minister today who does so? Alas, how many have despised and neglected such practical yet unpopular teaching! Desirous of being regarded as "deep," they have turned aside unto doctrinal disputes or prophetic speculations which profit no one. God says "If any man teach otherwise. . . he is a fool, knowing nothing" (1 Tim. 6:3, 4)!

Once again is the pastor Divinely ordered, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: that the aged men be sober . . . the aged women likewise . . . young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. . . Servants to be obedient unto their own masters, 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 2:1-9). Are you, fellow minister, speaking upon these things? Are you warning servants that all needless absenteeism is a sin? Are you informing those of your church members who are employees that God requires them to make it their constant endeavour to give full satisfaction unto their masters in every part of their conduct: that they are to be respectful and not saucy, industrious and not indolent, submissive and not challenging the orders they receive? Do you teach them that their conduct either adorns or disgraces the doctrine they profess? If not, you are sadly failing in carrying out your commission.

In view of the almost total silence of the pulpit thereon, it is striking to see how frequently the New Testament epistles inculcate and enlarge upon the duties of employees. In Ephesians 6 we find the apostle exhorting, "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, 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" (verses 5-7). Christian servants are required to comply with the calls and commands of their employers: to do so with respectful deference to their persons and authority, to be fearful of displeasing them. They are to be as diligent in their work and to discharge their duties with the same conscientious solicitude when their master is absent as when his eye is upon them. They are to perform their tasks "with good will," not sullenly and reluctantly, but thankful for an honest means of livelihood. And all of this as "the servants of Christ," careful not to dishonor Him by any improper behavior, but seeking to glorify Him: working from such motives as will sanctify our labours and make them a "spiritual sacrifice" unto God.

In Colossians 3 the apostle also exhorted, "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. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (verses 22, 23). Every lawful command he must obey, however distasteful, difficult or irksome. He is to be faithful in every trust committed to him. Whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he must do it with his might, putting his very best into it. He is to do it readily and cheerfully, taking pleasure in his work. All is to be done "as to the Lord," which will transform the secular into the sacred. Then it is added, "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (verse 24)—what encouragement to fidelity is that! "But he that doeth wrong, shall receive the wrong which he hath done" (verse 25) is a solemn warning to deter from failure in duty, for "either in this world or the other, God will avenge all such injury" (J. Gill).

"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 endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Pet. 2:18, 19). This repeated insistence of the apostles for employees discharging their duties properly, indicates not only how much the glory of God is involved therein, but also that an unwillingness on their part makes such repetition necessary—evidenced by those who take two or three days' extra holiday by running off to religious meetings, thereby putting their masters to inconvenience. Holiness is most visible in our daily conduct: performing our tasks in such a spirit and with such efficiency as will commend the Gospel unto those we serve. Let it be borne in mind that these instructions apply to all servants, male and female, in every station and condition. Let each reader of these pages who is an employee ask himself or herself, How far am I really making a genuine, prayerful and diligent endeavour to comply with God's requirements in the performance of my duties? Let no "rules of unions" nor "regulations of shop stewards" be allowed to set aside or modify these Divine commandments.

It is to be pointed out that the above precepts are enforced and exemplified in the Scriptures by many notable examples. See how the Spirit delighted to take notice of the devotion of Eliezer, even praying that the Lord God would "send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham" (Gen. 24:12), and note how faithfully he acquitted himself and how well he spake of his master. Jacob could say, "ye know that with all my power I have served" (Gen. 31:6): can you aver the same? Though a heathen "his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight" (Gen. 39:3, 4): what a testimony was that! Scripture also chronicles the unfaithfulness of Elisha's servant and the fearful judgment which came upon him (2 Kings 5:20-27). Finally, let all domestics and employees remember that the servant place has been honored and adorned for ever by the willing and perfect obedience of the incarnate Son of God!

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10)—put your very best into it.