

In this final application of Colossians 3:17, Paul applies our completeness in Christ to our relationships in the workplace. The workplace is where most of us will spend a large part of our lives, and therefore one of the most vital places that the Christian must learn to live out his or her faith.

1. The Employee's Ministry to the Employer Is Obedience from the Heart (3:22-25).

1.A. Christian employees serve God by serving their employer – “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:” (3:22).

1.A.1. We must view our work as our ministry from God – “fearing God” (22c).

Three times in verses 22-24 Paul reminds the believer that we serve God in our work. Our primary accountability for our work is before God, and secondarily to our employer.

1.A.2. We should serve with sincerity – “not with eyeservice, as menpleasers” (22b).

Honesty on the workplace is of vital importance. Our behavior shouldn't be one way when the boss is looking, and another when he's not. That's nothing more than dishonesty.

Titus 2:9-10 “Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; **not answering again; Not purloining (stealing), but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.**”

Our spirit and behavior on the job is coloring others' perception of the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are argumentative, defensive, unapproachable, and self-centered, we are destroying people's view of our God and our Savior!

1 Timothy 6:1 “Let as any servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, **that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.**”

There is more at stake than just our reputation. Our behavior on the job is shaping others' opinions of God! We must do all that we can not to provide an occasion for those in the world to blaspheme, and make light of God and His Word.

Philippians 2:14-15 “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”

This still applies when you have a Christian employer! 1 Timothy 6:2 “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.B. We should be put our heart into our work, leaving the results to God (22, 23, 24).

1.B.1. We must work with a single-minded focus. Paul refers to this as “singlehearted” obedience. This kind of focus does not happen accidentally. We cannot honor Christ in our work if we harbor bad feelings toward our boss. Our actions should flow from a heart that is trying to please God.

1.B.2. We must focus upon future heavenly rewards – “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

In Paul's day, half the population of the Roman empire were slaves without any rights. Their masters could treat them however they chose. If a slave had the ability to purchase his own freedom, he was to do so as we find in 1 Corinthians 7:21, “Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it: but if thou mayest be free, use it rather.”

But whether or not the slave's service resulted in his freedom, he was promised the inheritance of eternal life, and the reward for all that he did to honor God as he served his master. In 2 Corinthians 3:11-15, we find that we will be rewarded based on all that we have done for Christ, but all the sinful things we do will be burned up.

Before moving on, we must ask ourselves, “Can a Christian belong to a union and still honor their employer?” There are sincere Christians on both sides of this issue. Unions typically promote and adversarial relationship between their employers and their union members. Here are some questions you need to answer before joining a union.

First, will joining a union compromise my obligations toward God? 2 Corinthians 6:14 commands us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Many unions promote social issues and political candidates that Christians should not support. For instance, will some of your union dues go to promote abortion?

Second, will joining a union compromise my obligations to my employer? Will the union you seek to join come between you and your employer, or set you against your employer in any way?

Third, will joining a union violate the rights of the employer or fellow employees? Is it ethical to refuse to work and yet force your employer from hiring a replacement? Is it ethical to force your employer to pay you higher wages through strikes? Is it ethical to make joining a union mandatory for employees who do not support the union?

I personally believe that a joining a union is not necessarily a bad thing as long as 1) the union does not support unbiblical causes, 2) the union does not use extortion to manipulate the employer, and that 3) membership in the union is voluntary, not mandatory.

2. The Employer’s Ministry to the Employee Is Just and Fair Treatment (3:25-4:1).

Colossians 3:25 “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

2.A. God will hold you accountable for the way that you treat your employees (25).

In Paul’s day, slaveholders could treat their slaves in any way that they saw fit, even to the point of taking their life. But God holds Christians to a higher standard.

Galatians 3:28-29 “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. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

God owns every man and woman because He is the Creator, so we had better be careful in the way that we treat God’s creatures.

If we employ Christians, we are held to an even higher standard. We are to treat our Christian employees as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is manifested in the way Christians solve disputes. Christians are to refrain from taking one another to court, but take the matter to the leadership of their local church for resolution.

2.B God is your Master, so treat others with justice and equality (4:1).

Colossians 4:1 “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.”

God is a God of justice and fairness. He will reward every Christian for what we do for Him (2 Corinthians 5:10), and He will judge every unrepentant sinner for every deed committed against Him (Revelation 20:12).

Employers are held to the same standard as their employees.

Ephesians 6:9 says, “And ye masters, do the same things unto them...”

In caring for our employees, we minister to Christ (Colossians 3:23 “as to the Lord”). Matthew 25:40 says, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Conclusion:

1. Christian employees are to serve their employers from the heart as their primary service to God!
2. Christian employers are to deal justly and fairly with their employees as their primary service to God!
3. Both are to recognize that their Master is God, and seek to serve one another with the resources that God has given: the Word and the Holy Spirit.