

THE PREEMINENCE
AND
SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST



Sermon Series Notes



“Taking God To Work” (Colossians 3:22-4:1)

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* "Take This Job and Shove It" is a song by [David Allan Coe](#) from his 1978 album, [Family Album](#) about the bitterness of a man who worked long and hard with no apparent reward. The song was famously covered by [Johnny Paycheck](#). The Johnny Paycheck version hit number one on the country charts for two weeks, spending eighteen weeks on the charts. The song inspired a [film](#) by the same name.

* Work is so important in our society that people are normally defined by what they do. We ask, “What do you do for a living?” In the days of the writing of these instructions, practically all work was done by slaves. Ancient historians estimate there were some 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire. That’s about half the population. Roman-era slavery was far different than the slavery in America. First of all, it was non-racial. And slaves worked in various occupations. There were doctors who were slaves, teachers who were slaves, house managers, people in business and industry, etc. Sometimes free laborers would actually sell themselves as slaves as a means of economic advancement. And many slaves were emancipated by the time they were thirty years old. With all that said, ancient tradition still classified slaves as things, living tools. So Christianity’s teaching regarding slave/master relationships was revolutionary. Consider, for example, Gal.3:28.

I. A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF WORK

A. God Ordained Work From The Beginning

* Gen.2:15

* I Thess.3:10 lays down this rule: “If a man will not work, neither should he eat.”

* We have a lot of “freeloaders” in our country, and unfortunately some are in the church.

B. God Never Intended For Man To Be Consumed With Work

* Ex.20:9-11

* Note: Work is meant to be a part of my “fulfillment” in life

C. Man’s Work Has Been Affected by Sin

* Gen.3:17-19

II. A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE/RESPONSIBILITY IN MY WORK

A. As A Master

1. I will answer to my Master for how I treat my slave
2. Determining what is right and fair?

* What is fair may not be what is right...fairness speaks of equity (justice according to natural law or right), but I must not always deal with a servant/employee solely based on what is equitable...

* See Matthew 20:1-15

* Philemon & Onesimus (Col.4:9; Philemon). What was “fair” for Onesimus was not what was “right.” See Matthew 18:21-35.

B. As A “Slave”

1. I am ultimately working for the Lord
2. I will receive a reward from the Lord
3. I will be held accountable by the Lord (3:25)
4. My “witness” is dependent on my work ethic (See Titus 2:9-10; to adorn, decorate).

III. SOME VERY PRACTICAL POINTS

A. Living This Out May Not Always Bring Immediate “Blessing”

* Joseph; See Gen.39:1-10, 19-23; 40:23; 41:1ff, 39-43 (that’s quite a promotion!)

* Daniel; See Daniel 6:1-5; Daniel’s work ethic got him thrown into the den of lions, and it was through this that we read the outcome of Daniel’s faithfulness (see Daniel 6:25-27).

* See I Peter 2:18-23

B. Three Essentials For A Christian In The Workplace

1. Performance

* A Christian boss should be a most generous boss...a Christian employee should be the most committed employee...

2. Purity

* Purity: The absence of [impurity](#) or [contaminants](#) in a substance.

* Happy hour invitations may get you in real trouble; no flirting; no one on one meetings with the opposite sex in private...

- * Be careful about jealousy/envy regarding other people's work
 - John 21:21-22, Peter's jealousy of John
 - Korah's rebellion (Num.16; 4:4; 7:7-9; 16:9-10)

* Don't harbor negatives feelings toward a boss/employee (See "My Utmost for His Highest," Feb.23rd).

3. Perseverance

* Don't quit unless you are certain the Lord is leading you this way. My advice is don't quit until you find other employment in the will of God (I realize there may be exceptions to this)...

* Note: I have talked with some Christians over the years who want to work in a place where only other Christians work. Who wouldn't? But if we all worked at jobs where only Christian's work, where would our witness be? God sometimes forces a believer into an unpleasant, ungodly work environment for His glory...

C. By Living This Out, I Allow God To Promote/Demote Me According To His Will & Plan For My Life.

* Conversely, there is the possibility that my unfaithfulness in this area could cause me to miss God's will for my life. And not only might it altar the will of God for my life, I will be "repaid" for my wrong, and God shows no favoritism (3:25)

* See Col.4:17

* John Mark missed out on some great ministry as a result of his leaving "the work" in Pamphylia and heading back home to Jerusalem. He "quit" his job if you will. See Acts 13:13; 15:37-38. John Mark was their "helper." This word literally means and "under oarsman," and of course our minds can envision a ship powered by these men down below rowing in unison in response to the command of their "boss," who usually carried a whip for the backs of the insubordinate. Why did he leave the work? It could have been that the going just got too tough. But there are some other possibilities. It was Barnabas who was sent by the apostles to Antioch after the gospel had reached this Gentile city. Barnabas goes to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he finds him he brings him to Antioch. The last time we saw Saul of Tarsus was in Acts 9:30-31 (read). So Acts 11:26 tells us that for a whole year Barnabas & Saul taught great numbers of people in Antioch. The next verse says that these followers of Jesus were first called "Christians" at Antioch (no doubt a direct result of the teaching ministry of Baranabas & Saul). Then Barnabas & Saul are sent out from Antioch as missionaries, with Barnabas clearly the leader of the team, of which John Mark is an "under oarsman" (see Acts 13:2). They come to Paphos, where Saul (also called Paul) stood up against a Jewish sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (also called "Elymas"). God caused this sorcerer to go blind, and as a result, his boss, who he was trying to deter from the gospel message being proclaimed, believed in the Lord. It was right after this that John Mark leaves them. Next we find Barnabas & Paul in Pisidian Antioch, and an invitation is given to them by the synagogue ruler to share a message of encouragement to the congregation. Paul stands up and shares. From this point on, every time Paul

and Barnabas are mentioned, Paul is mentioned first. This is no accident. Though Barnabas was initially the “boss” on this ministry team, in the will of God, Paul became the leader. This becomes extremely clear to me when you get to Acts 15:36-41 (read). I think one of the reasons John Mark left the work assigned to him was not just that the going got tough, but that Paul began to exercise more of a leadership role in the ministry team. And Paul was a tough guy to work for! Whatever the reason, he did not continue in the work, and he missed out on some very fruitful ministry opportunities. Thank God this is not the end of the story for John Mark (see II Tim.4:9-11).

* Before you quit “your job,” consider whether it is the Lord telling you to quit. Perhaps you have already quit (and it was not God’s will). Repent, then develop perseverance so that you will not make the same mistake again.

* King Saul did not do the job God gave him, and when confronted for his failure, he made excuses. His failure led ultimately to his losing his “job” as king, suffering a premature death, and taking his sons down with him...

CONCLUSION

* Perhaps there are some Christian bosses that need to reconsider what is “right & fair” for your employee(s). What is “fair” may not be what is “right.”

* And it very likely someone here that just cannot get that song of their head “Take This Job & Shove It.” You’re ready to quit. But is that really the Lord’s will?

* And for all of us, are we doing our work as unto the Lord, or just for a paycheck? Are we seeking to please the Lord, or just our boss?

* Prayer – Help us to live this out Lord...increase our witness...may we not miss your will for our lives as a result of our failure in these practical instructions...