

A Servant's Attitude

I. Priorities in Prosperity

At the end of James chapter 4 and the beginning of James chapter 5, James is dealing with factions in the church. In these chapters, James addresses those who are bosses in the church and those who are employees.

God's desire is to bless businesses, but He wants those businesses to keep Him first. The reason God put business in this earth was to help fund the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Romans 12, seven offices of the body of Christ are listed.

Romans 12:6-8:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teaches on teaching:

Or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that gives, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

The office of the giver is one of the seven offices mentioned in these verses. Givers are those in the body of Christ who prosper above and beyond the ordinary. God desires for all of His children to prosper. In fact, the Bible says He delights in the prosperity of His servants. He also tells us in the Word that whatever we set our hand to will prosper if we continue to follow Him. But there are those in the body of Christ gifted by God to make money. God desires these people to rise to the surface of the church because of the great ability God has placed within them to fund the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing successful businesses must guard against is allowing their priorities to become unbalanced. Often, when a business becomes very successful and prosperous, there is a tendency for the businessperson to get their eyes off God and onto their success. They begin to believe that all of their hard work and effort is what brought success and forget it was the Lord Who caused their hand to prosper and it was the Lord Who gave them power to get wealth that His covenant may be established in the earth.

When the children of Israel came into the promised land, they began to forget the Lord and began to think their own power and ability brought the

prosperity. They completely forgot it was the Lord Who gave them power to get that prosperity.

II. The Lord of Sabaoth

James 5:4:

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

The term “*Lord of sabaoth*” is the Old Testament title “Lord of hosts.” This was a very popular title in the Old Testament and James knew many in his congregation would identify with this term. The meaning of this title is “Jehovah of armies, the Lord is captain, the leader of the army.” James is simply explaining to his congregation, “When you come against God’s people, the Lord comes against you in battle array.”

This verse is talking about employers not treating their employees fairly. God doesn’t like it when someone takes advantage of His people. When an employee is depending on the income an employer promised and the employer purposely doesn’t come through, it is very displeasing to God. Not only is that employee waiting for the paycheck to supply for their family, they are also waiting to supply the gospel. When an employer unfairly holds back what is due an employee, they are actually holding back the kingdom of God and the number of people that can be reached with the gospel. This verse says that the Lord comes against this type of employer in battle array.

III. The Lord is Our Defense

James 5:7-9:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

Grudge not (grumble or murmur not) one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned (judged): behold, the judge (even right now) stands before the door.

James is admonishing the employees in the previous verses to realize there is an ultimate judge coming one day and that judge also stands beside them. Although these verses address the Second Coming of the Lord, he is also addressing brethren who work for bosses treating them unfairly.

When we are treated unfairly, there is often a tendency to want to stand up for our rights and say, “Wait a minute! I deserve something better than this! I should be making more money. My boss isn’t treating me fairly!” We try to rise up in our own defense.

I am not saying you should never go and ask for a raise. And I am not saying that you shouldn’t present your case at an appropriate time. But what you must understand is you are not to defend yourself. The Lord is the One Who defends you. He comes in battle array to protect you and to come against those who steal your wages—who hold back your wages by fraud and deceit.

IV. The Reason We Work

If you asked most Christians today why they work, the answer would be, “I work so I can put food on the table. Why else?” But that is not the real reason we work. God says that He will provide the food. You may think, “Yes, but He provides food by providing a job.” But if for some reason you found yourself unemployed, He would still provide food.

Ephesians 4:28 reveals the main reason we are to work.

Ephesians 4:28:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.

The main reason we work is to provide the gospel for people. The first priority for our finances is to give into God’s kingdom. Proverbs 3:9 says, “*Honor the Lord with your substance and with the firstfruits of all your increase.*” Our attitude should be, “When the money comes in, the firstfruits will immediately go to the Lord and I will live off the rest.”

There will be no rewards in heaven for the car you drove or the kind of house you lived in or the type of food you ate or the quality of the china off of which you ate that food. Those are all fine in this lifetime, but we will be rewarded for what we have given into the kingdom and the lives that were affected as a result.

1 Peter 2:11-12:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Why are we to abstain from fleshy lusts? So our lives can represent the Lord in this world. God has left us in the midst of the heathen as representatives of Him in the earth.

V. You Are the Salt of the Earth

I often hear Christians say, “I just wish I could work for Christians. It would be so wonderful to be around Christians all day!” But God has not called salt to salt itself! God has called salt to go into the world to preserve it. God desires that the heathen would come to know the Lord through our lifestyle.

So often, the heathen attack Christians. We hear comments like, “If it weren’t for those right-wing conservative Christians we wouldn’t have the push for censorship. They always want to stop things. They are not current. They are old-fashioned, judgmental moralists.”

But the Bible says, “Just hang on! There is coming a day of visitation. This day of visitation is not a reference to the Lord’s return. The day of visitation is the day those who are accusing and blaming Christians will see their world, as they know it, come crumbling apart. Every sinner will face this day if they continue to reject Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Those sinners who decide there is more to life will one day come looking for that “old, fuddy-duddy Christian.” And even if he can’t find you, the seed you planted will result in him coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Aren’t you glad someone sowed seed into your life? Aren’t you glad there was a day of visitation in your life?

The real problem is Satan. Satan is in the business of disguising himself as an angel of light and convincing people that Jesus is the problem, God is the problem, or Christians are the problem.

VI. We Are Debtors

Romans 1:14-15:

I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

We are debtors to give the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world. We are debtors to the wise (the educated), and to the unwise (the uneducated). We are debtors to the janitor and to the president of the corporation. Every sinner needs the gospel and we are a debtor to every sinner we meet. We are a debtor to every nationality, every income level, every social level, every age level, and every gender. We owe the debt of the gospel to every person we meet and it is a debt that can never be repaid. Romans 13:8 says, "*Owe no man anything, but to love one another.*" The love debt never gets paid off. You can pay on it now and five seconds later still owe the bill of love. We are debtors to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to everyone we meet.

VII. The "Baby Boomer" Generation

Beginning in 1946 through 1962, a generation labeled the "Baby Boomer" generation was born. During this time, there was a visible increase of births worldwide. Initially, sociologists and others studying the phenomenon believed it was the result of World War II ending. But this wasn't the case because they even found an increased birthrate in countries that were never involved in the war. They graphed the birth rate over the years, and from 1946 to 1962 there was a huge increase worldwide with no real explanation.

I personally believe the reason for the "baby boom" was a great influx of souls coming into the kingdom of God. I believe it is part of the great revival God is looking forward to before the return of Jesus Christ. Many born during those years have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They will lead many more into the kingdom. Then, those who are saved will go into all the world and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ!

This generation has also produced some very negative fruit. It is probably one of the most self-centered generations we have ever seen. "Baby Boomers" want things handed to them on a silver platter. We live in a "drive-through" generation and we will pay for anything. If something breaks, we just throw it away and buy another one—that's just the way most of us think. This generation has the idea the world owes them everything.

Now, a new generation has been born with the same thinking instilled in them that was in their parents. Their thinking is also, "This world owes me something!" They want a job they don't have to work hard at, but want to be paid well for. If they don't get what they want, they go some place else looking for utopia. They want perfect jobs, mass incomes, and they want

to put in only two or three hours a day so they can relax and let someone else feed them, clothe them, and take care of them. “If my job isn’t paying enough, I’ll just quit working altogether and let the federal government take care of me. After all, they owe me!” It is a “give me, give me, give me” generation.

The sad thing is born-again believers have come into the Spirit-filled life with the same idea. “The church owes me! The Sunday school department owes me! The pastor owes me! My job owes me! My boss owes me!” Paul is trying to make us realize in Romans 1 that this thinking is wrong. Instead, we owe them! We owe them salvation. When we got born-again, Jesus Christ set us free from our debt of sin, but He also placed a debt of the whole world on our shoulders that can never be paid off in this lifetime. If it were possible to lead everyone we meet to the Lord, we still owe this generation the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, this “love debt” will never be paid off.

Christians need to have an entirely different attitude than most do with their employers. Instead of saying, “How much are you going to do for me?” We should be saying, “What can I do for you?” because God has placed you in this position to get people saved. Wherever you work, you owe that employer eight hours a day of hard work because it will be a witness for the Lord.

VIII. The Unreasonable Boss

1 Peter 2:18:

Servants (employees), be subject to your masters (employers) with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

This could be better translated, “*Employees, be submissive to your bosses with all respect; not only to the good and to the gentle, but also to the unreasonable and to the unjust.*”

Not everyone works for a wonderful boss. Some are unreasonable and unjust. There are times we have to work for unreasonable and unjust people. Notice, this verse doesn’t say you work more diligently for the good and just boss and less diligently for the unjust boss. You work the same for both because you owe every person around you the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Part of the gospel is how you live. Your good works and life before them will sow seeds.

Your boss may be unreasonable because he has problems in his personal life and takes it out on his employees. His wife may not be so great. His home life may not be so great. He may be running around on his wife,

sleeping with other women, and filled with anger toward himself. Your boss may be so unreasonable that you begin to think, “I’m better than this! I deserve better than this! I should be working for someone else!” But this verse is saying, part of your responsibility before the Lord is to work with the same diligence whether you have a good boss or bad boss.

1 Peter 2:19:

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

IX. Work As Unto the Lord

1 Peter 2:20:

For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

There are times we will be buffeted for what we do right and times we will be buffeted for our faults. Just because we do a hard, honest day’s work doesn’t mean people are always going to thank us for it. People may become jealous or angry because we work diligently when the boss is in the office and we work diligently when he is *not* in the office. When the boss is gone, many will come in late, take a little longer at lunch, and slough off. But when he is in the office, they will work very hard.

James is instructing his congregation that regardless of whether or not the boss is present, they need to work diligently as unto the Lord. He is admonishing them that they owe a debt, which includes doing an honest day’s work. The same is true for us today!

I have had people say, “Pastor, I was fired for witnessing on the job.” My response is, “You should have been fired for witnessing on the job. You were not hired to witness. You were hired to do good work, and doing good work *is* a witness.”

Witnessing should be done on our own time. Most bosses will not understand us coming late to work with the excuse, “Well, I’m late because I stopped and witnessed to someone on the side of the road.” You were hired to put in a full day’s work. You can witness before work, on your lunch hour, or after work but the rest of the time, your hard work should be your witness.

X. Do All in the Name of the Lord

Colossians 3:17 says, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*”
The “*whatsoever*” Paul is referring to includes our job performance.

1 Peter 2:21-23:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Who did no sin (literally, committed no sin), neither was guile found in his mouth:

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed (literally, deposited) himself to him (God the Father) that judgeth righteously:

Jesus is our example. He was not buffeted for His faults because He was faultless. Jesus was buffeted for that which was right. He was buffeted even to death on the cross. But Jesus had confidence knowing even though He stood before natural men, the One standing behind those men was God the Father. Jesus deposited or committed Himself into the hands of God. Man crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead.

XI. Submissive in the Flesh

Ephesians 6:5:

Servants, (employees) be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.

Notice, we are to be submissive in the flesh, not in the spirit. Bosses do not control your spirit or your spiritual life, but they do have authority over you in the flesh. If your boss asks that you work longer, work longer. If your boss asks that you come in earlier and stay later, come in earlier and stay later. If your boss piles more work on you than anyone else in the office, do the extra work as unto the Lord. It must be understood, however, if your job is so demanding you can't attend church, you are violating the standard set in Hebrews 10:25: “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”
If your job becomes so demanding that your church attendance is affected, you either need to put your faith out for a better job or pray for your boss to have a change of heart. God's highest priority is the maintenance of our spiritual life.

Verse 5 continues by saying employees should be obedient to their employers “*with fear and trembling*”. The word “*fear*” means “maximum respect”. The word “*trembling*” is the Greek word “*tromos*” from which the English word “trauma” comes and means “maximum effort to the point of trembling”. In other words, when on the job, we should work so hard we end up shaking at the end of the day because we have put forth our maximum effort.

XII. The Judge of All Judges

Ephesians 6:5 concludes by saying that we should work in “*singleness of heart, as unto Christ*”. There is a Boss Who is over *every* boss. We may have a natural boss standing in front of us, but there is another Boss standing behind him—Jesus Christ!

When Jesus was taken by the magistrates to court, He realized there was another Judge behind the judge He faced. Even though this natural judge wrongly sentenced Jesus, Jesus didn’t stand up and defend Himself. Instead, He committed Himself to the Judge of all judges.

What should be our response if our boss is treating us unjustly? We should turn ourselves over to the Boss of bosses. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. If we work with singleness of purpose as unto the Lord, He will watch over us and reward us.

XIII. Promotion Comes From the Lord

Ephesians 6:6-8:

Not with eyeservice, 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 (employee) or free (employer).

Whether you are the employer or the employee, whether you own the corporation or are an employee of it, God is the One Who watches over you if you are a believer putting your trust in the Lord. If you are faithful, God will promote you. Promotion does not come from men. Promotion comes from the Lord.

Verse 6 says that we are not to work with “*eyeservice*”. Doing “*eyeservice*” means working hard when the boss is looking and hardly working when the boss isn’t around. A person may wrongly be promoted

because a boss mistakenly believes an employee is working hard when in reality he is doing eyeservice. This type of employee will probably be discovered and eventually demoted. But when God promotes, no man can demote!

When Jesus lived on earth, men tried to hold Him down. Men even tried to kill Him. They thought crucifying Jesus would stop Him. But not even death could stop Jesus! The ultimate Master was God Himself, and God raised Him from the dead!

People may try to hold you down, but they cannot keep you down. People have said to me, "Pastor, I work for a place and the manager hates my guts! He always piles extra work on me. He has promoted everyone around me but never me. I have made my appeal to the Lord, but I sure get weary working in these conditions." My answer is, "Hold on! God has great things coming for you." If God can't promote from within a company, He will move you to a new company just so He can promote you! Again, promotion comes from the Lord, not from man!

Christians who are living for the Lord are like a big cork. Men may try to keep you down, but you will always float right back up to the top! If God could raise Jesus from the dead, He can certainly promote you on the job!

Again, God wants us to serve Him while we are on the job, whether man sees what we are doing or not. Jesus is always with us wherever we go. We should always work as unto Him!

Colossians 3:22-25:

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, 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.

Understand, whatever we do, right or wrong, the Lord is the One Who rewards. We may be able to fool man. The boss may not realize that an employee is not working diligently, but the Lord knows. One day we will all stand before the Lord and give an account of how we have lived our lives. It will be a whole lot better standing before the Lord knowing to the best of our ability we did what was right rather than what was wrong!

James 5:7-9:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Grudge (murmur or complain) not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

The day the Lord returns, all systems of injustice will be destroyed. If the Lord's return was "drawing nigh" at the time James wrote his letter, how much nearer are we to His return today? Even if we knew nothing of world events, most believers believe Jesus is coming very, very soon! How sad to hold grudges against one another, to be upset on the job, to try to either deceive the boss or try to impress him in an attempt to be promoted.

As believers we are told to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt us in due time. The Lord, the righteous Judge stands at the door even now. I believe not only is He standing at the door, He is about to throw the door wide open! Jesus is coming very, very soon!

XIV. Your Life is But a Vapor

James 4:14 says our life is but a vapor that appears for a brief moment and then is gone. Our most important purpose while on earth is for people to come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

An incredible debt was handed to us the moment we accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and that debt is the world! One day soon, Jesus will return and the debt will be totally paid, but until that time we owe the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world!

We owe our bosses a full eight hours of hard work. We owe him whatever he wants us to do related to the job. The greatest thing anyone could ever say about our job is not the fact that we earned a great salary or we were popular in the work place. The greatest compliment we could receive is our witness on the job resulted in people coming to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!