

No.
125

“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.” ***COL.3.1***

A BELIEVER’S RELATIONSHIP TO
HIS DAILY BUSINESS
AND HIS EARTHLY EMPLOYER.

An Address (revised)

***At Wattam’s Restaurant,
17th December, 1918***

by

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An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
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OUTLINE:

- 1. The Nature of Occupation.**
- 2. Suitable Hours of Work.**
- 3. Overtime, Seeming Encroachments, and Similar Problems.**
- 4. Fellow Employees.**

(First part missed)

I am simply pointing out that the Scripture lays a stress upon Paul and other deeply earnest servants of God engaged in making "coverings", and that food provision is approvingly brought before us in the later Scriptures, also the menial duties which belong to those who had no high position in life. We therefore may draw a certain inference that the believer should recognize God's wisdom where he is placed. If he can therein abide with God, he should be careful not to hurriedly change. If he cannot therein abide with God, he should be concerned that any fresh occupation may be on the line in which he would have a conscience at spiritual rest. Much prayer is needed in this connection, and one would feel that the general inference from passages such as Acts 18 and 1 Thess. 4. 11 would be this:

Believers are not to seek after high position and getting on in the world. They are not to aim at building up Babylonianism and commercial grandeur, but rather to show themselves concerned to be humble believers in connection with the provision of the necessities of life. This seems a general principle. And when we find passages, likewise in the earlier Scripture, (e. g. Isa. 3) where we have the

parade of clothing condemned, one feels that children of God should avoid being in any trade which would cause their brethren to stumble, and would suggest any helping forward of that which gives a harmful opposition to the simple principles which God has emphasized. But on the other side, Scripture does not say, "Take up this trade", "Do not take up that trade". It does not say "Go and live in a village", nor does it at all suggest "Form a colony of Christians away from every town". The natural mind, disappointed in connection with the sad circumstances of today, – the NATURAL mind in a believer will sometimes be led by Satan to wish after a Christian colony. But it is without Scripture warrant. On the other hand, believers must beware lest they help forward the spirit of commercialism, or lest they are identified with any business which has the principle of the shekel large and the ephah small, or anything which is dishonorable and dishonest, and out of keeping with the preservation of godly transparency, and an ability to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and with a desire to receive His "Well done". Each believer should be serving the Lord, and in the law of Christ, and not a man-pleaser, or "merely" occupied in "mere" actions when engaged in daily life. Unless the believer can accomplish that which He does UNTO THE LORD, he is in a wrong place, or if in a right place is in a wrong condition. How important it is that we should be willing to lose everything rather than dishonor the Name of the Lord, or disfigure our Christian experience and testimony. But there is a real reason why our gracious God does not say "Take up this trade", "Do not take up that trade". He does not bind us to certain actions, but awakens our LOVE and tests our condition by many seeming "vagueness's" as men would call them; – principles which need grace to apply them to exercise the heart. Let me to illustrate what I mean. I like sometimes, in teaching a language, to give an example of some piece of work that I set before those who are learning, without showing too clearly how it is an example. It seems quite distinct, but if they apply the principle rightly they can make it fit, yet they will need to think, they will need to puzzle over it to find out HOW the rule can be applied. I believe that God has worked along this method in training His people. He puts principles which awaken their spiritual concern, and test their love to Him, and the Holy Spirit wondrously guides humble disciples in the application aright. The law contained certain commandments in a very definite, plain way. In the present dispensation our beloved Lord has rather suggested "principles". He has not given a law-book with a catalogue of appointments. He

has not issued a number of regulations similar to Acts of Parliament, which are carefully prepared with repeated words and turned expressions, because it is taken for granted that there will be a large proportion in the nation who will wish to twist them for their own advantage, and therefore every loophole must be taken away. God has not dealt with His children as those who wish to change His words. He has dealt with them in a loving, gracious, expressive fellowship of a Father with His beloved children. He has written to them letters, not law-treatises, letters which are in harmony with the position of a believer in the present dispensation. We do not expect the laws of a land for a subject to be written in the form of a letter. We expect something more formal. But God has been pleased to cast out the majority of forms, though the letters are absolutely inspired, and the wording is Divinely exact. But the mode of instruction compels love's attention to all the different parts of Scripture, and we are blessed in comparing Scripture with Scripture, and looking at one verse in the light of another, and enjoying our father's will, and delighting in His slightest hints. So is it as to daily business. The more a believer is in fellowship with God, the more he will know and feel how the Scripture applies, and he will say "I cannot do this", and someone else, who may ignore the principle in its WIDER application will say "Why not?" and he will find it very difficult to explain why not, because there is not a harmony as to HIS STANDPOINT. There are certain arrangements in English idiom, or in the idiom of any language, as to which you can hardly explain why you say one thing and why you do not say another. From grammatical knowledge there would seem to be no reason, but intimacy with those who speak the language properly makes you feel a certain thing is fitting, and another expression is unidiomatic, and harsh, and unpleasant; and fellowship with God makes one feel what His will is. You cannot explain exactly WHAT you realize by laws of grammar, but you CAN realize what it IS by the power of grace, and so must it ever be, beloved friends. God has put His people under probation for the kingdom. As they live in the present time they will be rewarded in that day. Hence He gives hints as to work and its nature, and gives in general such statements as we have in Eph. 4. 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 needeth. Any business that has the character of stealing, – I do not mean "outwardly", but much more as well, – is hereby forbidden to a child of God. He is to labour. Any lazy business, – if I may use a contradiction in terms, is

out of place for a believer. It is not well that he should be paid for a mere nothing. He is not to seek after “a soft job” as men say. He is to labour, working with his hands, for there is no Scripture appointment for payment as to mere talkativeness. In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. May I suggest that those who think they have gone beyond the book of Proverbs have possibly never reached up to it yet. That brief part of Scripture is full of wondrous practical teaching, and it should ever be brought before believers as to their daily business. How wonderful are the words, for example, “The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing”. There are some spiritual sluggards, who when there is the coldness around are unwilling for the plowing, and they will have nothing in the glorious harvest. Aye, there is sluggishness in all of us. There are similar spiritual parallels throughout. The believer is to LABOUR with his hands. He is to use his strength, he is not to be a busybody, but he is to have a busy body. He is to be engaged in that which expends his strength which God has so graciously given, and he is to anticipate a toil, for though he is no longer in the first Adam to whom it was said “In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread”, he still bears the image of the earthy, and the bearing of the image of the heavenly is future. Consequently it is a good thing to be tired, not in itself, because of the value of the spiritual instruction which tiredness will preach in one’s experience. Furthermore, “Working with his hands the thing which is good” – he has to work something good, something which is commendable, not that which is evil, but that which will be a witness. We find similar passages. The apostle says, “That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with you own hands, as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have need of nothing”. The believer’s business is to be occupation which can be a testimony and which can provide his NEEDS. In the second epistle to Thessalonians we are told of those who were disorderly, working not at all, but WORKING ABOUT OR AROUND, as the word implies, – busybodies. They settled down to nothing except to talkativeness. They were flitting about instead of having a fixity. The child of God is not to expect to be one who can do everything badly and nothing well, he should WORK at that which he undertakes. He should be in many ways beyond others, because he is exceedingly zealous for the glory of God. Relieved of the strain of worry, and having a desire to do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, he should produce better work than the

many who surround him. He should take his spirituality into his business, and glorify God in its details. So we see that the nature of occupation is rather given us by principles than by direct statements, that each believer may exercise his own heart and exercise himself to have a conscience void of offence to God and man, seeking prayerful fellowship and advice of likeminded saints. I need hardly say, moreover, that if one has trouble before the Lord as to his present occupation it is joy to have such fellowship in prayer concerning it; and the beginning of business for any committed to the care of a father and just going forth into the world is a most momentous subject, and Christian parents need to wait on God very definitely in this matter. The principles suggested in Ephesians are very important. There should be, as we have seen, that which is the reverse of stealing, that which implies and involves labour, and exercises the hands. That which is good and honourable in the sight of men, something really good and useful. For the believer is not appointed by God to do something that is “bad”, even if some remark “The world have bad things IN ANY CASE”. He is commanded to make his business a witness that he is not carried away by the spirit of commercialism, or money making. The repetition of these thoughts is surely not grievous, may we not add, “For you it is safe”. Oh to be drawn to a right standpoint.

And now we pass to “Suitable Hours”. “Man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening”, that is the Divine statement in Psalm 104, and the earlier Scriptures show plainly that work was regarded as that which occupied the day-time. Ruth, the gleaner, is commended because she came and continued from the morning until the middle of the day, or thereabouts, and then she gleaned until the evening, and beat out that she had gleaned. This is suggestive. God’s people must be careful they do no turn things up-side-down. I have no doubt there may be exceptional individual arrangements as in the case of God’s servant Paul, who laboured night and day, and possibly he did some of his tentmaking at night, that he might have more time to preach God’s truth in the day. But it requires a Paul to do the work of Paul. The majority of children of God are apt to get irregularity in their character if they have such exceptional arrangements, and his hours of work would produce in different temperaments different results, including perhaps one of the following; – disgust at work, which would lose the witness; engrossment with work which would equally lose the witness. The believer is not

appointed to get on in the world which has been crucified to him. He is to use the world, as not using it TO THE FULL (*that means as not misusing it*) see 1 Cor. 7,31. He is bidden to work and therefore he works, but he is not his own, he is not to lay up for himself treasure upon earth. He is to seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and have earthly needs added, they are not the aim of life. His idea is not to “gain” a little more money, but to use his time for the Lord, and anything which interferes with time for the Lord he judges with holy severity, and he is afraid of himself, for he knows how easily he is carried away, and seeks to be an example that he may exhort other daily, lest they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and he does not resent receiving an exhortation daily lest HE be hardened. He finds that Josiah was commended for a heart which was gentle and tender toward truth, and he knows how easy it is to have a heart which is less receptive and unwilling to receive with meekness the engrafted word. He desires, therefore to have an occupation in which he can carry out the principles of Scripture which show time for prayer and time for the word, and time for the Lord’s people. Like Daniel, he is enthusiastic to pray unto the Lord; we remember the three times, evidently suggestive of “Morning, noon, and night”. Like other dear servants of God, he is determined that he will have the things of God when he rises up and when he lays down. It is difficult to say the suitable number of hours for work. I think some dear children of God have more fellowship with God’s people and get through as much spiritually with longer business hours than others, because it is possible to have the privilege of short hours AND YET to fritter away the time. But in general if a believer knows how to use his time for the Lord he can begin to ask the Lord to give Him some MORE time thus to use definitely. Do not misunderstand me. ALL daily work should be unto the Lord. A believer has not simply an eight hours day, but a twenty-four hours. Everything belongs unto God, and if he sleeps he receives that as a gift of covenant grace, – “He giveth unto His beloved sleep”, – and so the child of God sleeps to the glory of God, choosing on this account the RIGHT time for his sleeping and no more, and endeavoring to be awake through the daytime, and to have an alertness of mind which is manifest even when children of God are gathered together. It is deeply important that we should know how to do ALL in the Name of the Lord Jesus, but there are different parts of the life, and “proportion” is the problem. If a believer can do more witnessing the Lord may be pleased to reduce the hours of tent-making. Paul seems to have spent more

time in tent-making when he was disappointed through his failure, a temporary, spiritual failure which is recorded so humbly, and yet so graciously, but which had real effects. Oh, beloved friends, it is not for us to sigh and long for “more hours”, but at once to use what we have, and then the Lord will promote us. This is the important principle, though immediate severance from soul-hindering “overtime” may be necessary. If there is nothing which grieves your conscience in your daily work, look to God to please Him in it, and to relieve you still more of certain arrangements as you please Him the more. Let me repeat, however, that if your daily work seems against the Lord in any way, and robs you of your spiritual quietness and fellowship with saints, be jealous of the Lord’s glory, and let not any spirit of Babylonianism or commercialism come in to blur your vision of His important will.

“Overtime” is one of the gravest problems which children of God have to meet in the strenuous times in which we live, linked with any similar encroachments upon time. The believer is commanded to be submissive before an employer and with goodwill to do service as to the Lord and not to men. Rightly he stands outside all trade-unions and all attempts of agitation in any form to bring pressure to bear on those who are in local or broader authority. If the believer has a subject which causes him deep concern he takes the case straight to the highest court, and there submits it and feels the reality of power in prayer, but he dare not agitate, nor dare he associate, as we shall see in a moment, in schemes which involve the unequal yoke of believer and unbeliever. If “overtime” is impressed, what is he to do? We find in Scripture, if I mistake not, some extra strain in certain agricultural periods, – the ploughing in the cold, the lengthened labour of harvest, and so forth. But is the believer entitled to hinder himself from the command to forsake not the assembling of saints, and that we should exhort one another daily? Is he entitled to hinder himself as to these commands and take a share in the building up of COMMERCIALISM and receive payment for it? I say “receive payment”. Possibly some will not see with me, but I think there are graver problems in paid overtime than unpaid overtime. Paid overtime involves such an appearance of seeking the things of earth, and it is often more difficult for a believer to refuse unpaid overtime if he accepts that which is paid. On the other hand if he is continually allowing of unpaid overtime, there will be the same effect on his spiritual life, and, moreover, others will think he is aiming at

earthly favour; and therefore he should regard these trials as chastisement from God. Perhaps because he has neglected to use his time aright and to seek God's way out. PAID overtime he can in general refuse with a frank, definite firmness. Bought with a price he does not become an absolute servant of men. If he loses his situation the Lord will provide another, if he is not lazy. Only it is important that his life should not have a jerkiness. It is vain for him to be spiritually definite and determined that he will not work overtime if that is only a verbal spirituality, and if after refusing to work overtime he thinks he has an opportunity to spend more time in bed. It is important that the gained time should be USED FOR THE LORD. The believer must find out before the Lord just how he can use all his time best, and then knowing this from God he should seek to avoid anything which will interfere with the carrying out of the responsibility that God has laid upon him. There may be emergencies comparable to that which Christ referred to, helping the animal out on the Sabbath. Everyone can see these emergencies are real, and kindness to a fellow creature might cause one to do, as unto the Lord, certain brief overtime on special occasions, but "Lest any he be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" should be ringing in the ears at all times. The believer is not a Babylonian, and he must be kept from the spirit of commercialism. He does not belong to the ephah, he belongs to Christ.

As to fellow employees, the believer needs to walk in wisdom toward them that are without, manifesting a heavenliness of character wherever he is. He is to be courteous, for this has Divine approval, he is to answer every man with meekness and wisdom, but he cannot form friendship, except with those who are consistent believers in the Lord Jesus. Nor can he identify himself in the brotherhoods and other societies which include unsaved as well as saved men. He needs to be careful to maintain the dignity of a child of God among fellow employees, but not with an appearance of pride. In the power of the Holy Spirit he should do his work well and be concerned lest he dishonours the name of the Lord by slipshod work which will mean greater labour for others. He should show a dutifulness in the absence of those in authority that it may be seen there is no mere eye service. It is not for him to steal an employer's time to preach the Gospel of God to one who stands at his side. "Let him that stole steal no more" in THIS respect. He will witness for the Lord by conscientiously doing the work for which he is paid. Let him not offer unto the Lord that which costs him nothing. If

he wants to preach let him pay on his own account for this privilege, and realize the importance of not doing evil, of avoiding the doing of evil, that good may come. Nevertheless he should be glad, in his own time to take opportunities for witnessing to fellow employees who should also see by his manner of life that he has a heavenly citizenship and calling, and that he is concerned for their true spiritual welfare, and desires that they may enjoy the same precious reality which he has in the Lord Jesus Christ through His wondrous death and the pouring out of blood without which there could be no forgiveness.

Further addresses available:

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