

Reclaiming Occupied Territory

Missionaries Employed in the Resistance

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Introduction

- **Matthew 28:16-20:** It is very easy to read this passage and see it as having little relevance for those of us working in a secular vocation. Maybe we'll send "them" some money or pray for "them", but we see ourselves as never having received the calling to "go", and so we resign ourselves to second-class Christian citizenry making the widgets of our particular secular industry. But you *are* His disciple, so you have received the command to go and He *has* sent you out into the world. So the passage is to, and for, us. Christ has all authority; He is with you wherever He has sent you, so be about His business. His authority over all, and His presence in your life, is your comfort, strength, and source of all courage as you go.
- Three false paradigms limit our ability to heed and apply the above passage to our lives. The first is this spiritual/secular divide that categorizes certain work as "Christian", and all other work as "secular." But this false worldview minimizes and truncates Christ's dominion to the four walls of the Church, making Him impotent and marginalized "out there," while the real workers for Christ are laboring full-time for Him. The second false paradigm is to make a distinction of worth in our activity, seeing direct vocalization of the gospel as having greater inherent value than the production of widgets. But in Colossians 3:22-4:1, Paul emphasis the reward awaiting the worker who labors heartily for Christ in *whatever* he does. Finally, prone to myopic categorization of our lives, men have the tendency of separating their lives into distinct compartments. Christ's authority blends all three of our worlds (home, church, work) so that we might live with godly consistency.
- For those who find themselves in a secular job, you are engaged in a war, and a member of the resistance movement fighting against the tyranny of corporate unbelief that refuses to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. Sons, students, and men who are currently unemployed: You are the allied force preparing for invasion to liberate the occupied land. And wives and future wives: You are the home front, providing prayer support for the soldiers who are engaged in the battle.

Joseph

- **Integrity: Your private work life (Genesis 39):** Thrown into a foreign land, with a foreign people, working for a foreign employer, Joseph's comfort and confidence was God's abiding presence with him. Knowing he was not alone, and living under His blessing, Joseph turned to the living reality of God's presence in His life in the day of his temptation. All of our relationships and activities at work are open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. Your work life, as defined by God and your co-workers, should reveal the presence of Christ in your life. This presence requires that conversational intimacy be reserved for your wife alone, that kind, friendly aloofness characterize your female relationships, and that purity be your passion as you avoid even the appearance of evil. Integrity is the foundation upon which the resistance is fought. Without it, the battle is lost before there is any engagement with the enemy: *For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. Romans 2:24.*
- **Vocational Injustice (Genesis 39-41):** Injustice permeated the life of Joseph. He told the truth, and he was sold into slavery (Gen 37:28). He walked uprightly, and he was thrown into prison (Gen 39:20). He met a need, and he was forgotten (Gen 40:23). Welcome to life. But what was his response: Grumbling? Discontentment? Resentment? Bitterness? The theme of Joseph's life of faith was one of union and communion he enjoyed with His Savior (Gen 39:2,3,5,21,23), and the glory he always gave to Him (Gen 39:9; 40:8; 41:16). He recognized God's commission of him, having been sent by Him to save His people (Gen 45:1-9). And, when the ones who had committed the evil act feared that Joseph would show revenge, Joseph was the one dispensing comfort, kindness, and forgiveness to them (Gen 50:15-21).
- How are you responding to the perceived injustices in your job? What is coming out of your cup when it is knocked? Have you been passed over for a promotion? Do you work in a dead end job? Are your benefits poor, or is your salary too low compared to others? Has your management made bad decisions that have directly impacted your work adversely? Your only option as a soldier for Christ is to respond in the same manner of faith as Joseph. Faithfully serve your employer with gratitude, trusting in Christ's authority to do what is providentially good, true, and right. Be a minister of comfort, kindness, and forgiveness to others because you know your God is with you and He will not forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Give thanks for all your vocational "injustices," for you can rest and trust in God's good and pleasing plan that He has *not* revealed to you.

Daniel

- **Skill, Knowledge, and Talent (Dan 1:3,4,17):** Daniel and the other young men were gifted with secular abilities. Vocational

talent, skill, and knowledge are gifts given to you from God. Whether it's writing code, laying bricks, hanging a door, landing a plane, or completing month end financials, God has given you these abilities. If you excel beyond your co-workers in certain aptitudes, then give glory to God. Do not think these abilities are innate, for the world will make quite a show over you, lavishing you with praise, money, and titles. Humbly recognize their Source with your heart, mind, and lips. Your co-workers should have no confusion as to where your abilities come from.

- **Selling Your Soul (Dan 3:12-18):** Corporate beckoning for sole devotion and allegiance is an ancient demand. In the words of Solomon, there is indeed nothing new under the sun. While most employers today don't roll out ninety-foot statues of themselves, the insistence to bow down and worship the company store is still just as great. For some employees, it's the desire for money, recognition, power, or position. For others, it's the innate male zeal of task orientation, for the "in" box is never empty, and the vocational demands on your time are never satisfied. But you cannot serve two masters, and those three Jewish men knew it. They would not join their idolatrous co-workers (3:2,3) in their worship of this false god, but instead were willing to suffer the consequences of uncompromising devotion.
- **Corporate Politics and Ladders (Dan 6:3-10):** The ladder climbers were put out that somebody else was being considered for one of the upper rungs, so they decided to get a little nasty. Faced with this new Persian decree, Daniel was quite willing to bypass any promotion and throw his career (and life) out the window in order that He might worship His King. Political competition in the workplace is not only a reality, but is a promoted virtue in our culture. James 3:13-18 speaks of this "wisdom," calling envy and selfish ambition earthly, sensual, and demonic. James goes on to say that where this earthly wisdom of envy and selfish ambition exist, so does confusion and every evil thing (like the attempted murder of Daniel!). But the wisdom from above calls us to be men who are peaceable, gentle, merciful, and willing to yield. If God is pleased, He will raise us up. He needs no sinful help from us to accomplish that.

Conclusion

- **Hebrews 11:24-26:** Moses had it all: power, prestige, status, and wealth. And he gave it all away in order that He might gain the riches of Christ. His reward was Christ Himself. A Christian like you and I, Moses treasured Christ more than the treasures this world could offer him. One day the summary of your life will be written. Eulogies will be written, and your three worlds *will* blend and merge together. Will the consistent theme and message from each of these worlds be Christ, and Him alone? Will the consistent testimony of your life be that God was with you *wherever* you went? God has sent you, just like He sent Joseph and Daniel. So *whatever* you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, for He is your reward.

Every man is a missionary, now and forever, for good or for evil, whether he intends or designs it or not. He may be a blot radiating his dark influence outward to the very circumference of society, or he may be a blessing-spreading benediction over the length and breadth of the world. But a blank he cannot be: there are no moral blanks; there are no neutral characters."

**Thomas Chalmers
Scottish Preacher
1780-1847**

S. Schaefer, July 11, 2004