

PAYROLL DEPARTMENT

Tom Washburn works for a big corporation in Profitville in the payroll department. He says there are usually about two days out of the month when things get really quiet in their department. Some employees, with perhaps a little too much down time during those two days, have developed the art of fabricating tales to pass the idle periods. At least the one that follows is relevant to their department. Tom added a spiritual twist to it, and thus I include it in this volume.

Pastor Fred Anderson

It was always a long path to the end of Friday for Julian Smith. Monday always seemed only a half-step away. He only had one more elevator ride to go to reach the end of Friday's path. Then he would be free, at least until Monday. He allowed a bit of extra time for the final step in collecting his pay because the company had made major changes in its payroll process, and he knew the first week always presented a few glitches here and there. Mr. Smith entered the office of the payroll department

looking to pick up the fruits of his labor for the week. He dutifully waited in line until a clerk became available. Finally, he crossed the blue courtesy line and stepped up to the counter.

“May I help you?” asked the clerk named Mary.

“Yes, I’m here to pick up my pay,” replied Julian.

“Do you have your timesheet and your JK4 Authorization?” asked Mary.

“Yes,” answered Julian. “You will find everything here in this folder.”

The clerk opened the folder and then opened a drawer to her right. She began stamping the papers in Julian’s folder. After a while, Julian lost track of how many times she stamped the three sheets of paper in his file folder. Finally, Mary put a big red stamp on the front page of Form JK4 that showed she had completed all the proper stamping.

“Take these papers over to the cashier,” directed the clerk.

“Okay,” said Julian. “Thank ... thank you.”

Julian walked over to the line of people waiting outside the cashier’s office. Seven coworkers

in line and one in the office stood between him and his weekend. When it came time for him to be served, he walked into the cashier's office, closed the door behind him, and handed his papers to the cashier with a certain sense of relief that the process neared completion. James, the current cashier, looked at Julian's papers and then set them down on the counter.

"Mr. Smith, would you please stand over here on this line," said James.

The cashier then pulled a tape measure from his pocket and began to take Julian's physical measurements. First, he measured his height and then the width of his shoulders.

"Hey, what's going on?" asked Julian.

"Sir, I must get the correct dimensions," answered the clerk.

"For what?" asked Julian. "Oh, I know. We're getting new uniforms, right?"

Glaring at his coworker, James asked, "Do you prefer pine, cherry, or bronze?"

"For a uniform?" asked Julian, incredulously.

“Really, sir,” said the cashier. “This will be your final selection. It is hardly a decision to make light of.”

“Uhhh ... I think there’s been some mistake. I just came here to get my pay.”

Looking disgusted, the cashier handed Julian his papers and said, “You will examine the bottom paragraph of the last page, sir.”

Julian grabbed the papers, looked to the last paragraph, and began reading aloud, “The wages of sin is death. Uh ... no, wait, I didn’t see this before. I’ll ... I’ll be right back.”

With papers in hand, Julian ran back to the first line where the clerk processed his papers. Fortunately, he only had to wait for a minute to see the same clerk that had stamped all his paperwork.

“I’m sorry, ma’am,” said Julian. “I was here a few minutes ago, and ... and you approved all my forms with the stamps and all, and I think you made a mistake, or rather I think a mistake occurred somewhere in the process.”

“Let me have a look for you,” Mary replied. “No, everything seems to be in order.”

“But it says, ‘The wages of sin is death’. I just came here to get what I earned, you know, what I

put in all this time for. This paperwork must belong to someone else or something. Look, here's my social security card, my driver's license, my voter's card. And here, here's my blood donor's card."

"Very impressive," said the clerk. "But it doesn't change anything."

"Look, I want to speak to a supervisor," demanded Julian in desperation. "I want what I'm entitled to."

"Very well, sir," replied Mary. Picking up the phone, Mary dialed a number and said, "Mr. Jenkins, we have another one who wants what he's entitled to. Mr. Jenkins will be right with you."

"Uh, thank you," said Julian.

The supervisor, a tall man, came out of his office and walked over to Mary's station. Taking the papers from Mary, he examined them, and then addressed Julian.

"Now, Mr. Smith, how can we help you?"

"I just came here to get paid. This young lady seemed to have everything under control and then I went to the cashier and he started taking my measurements and ... and then he showed me the part about 'The wages of sin is death' and I said something is wrong and Mary said everything is in order

and then I said I wanted to see a supervisor and then she called you and that's where we're at."

"My dear Mr. Smith, please come back to my office ... Here, have a seat. Let me explain the situation. You see, those of us in the payroll department like to look at the bigger picture of life. Let's do some numbers. For example, how many hours a day do you sleep?"

"What?"

"How many hours a day do you sleep?"

"Seven or eight."

"Good. Now, Mr. Smith, how much time do you spend eating per day?"

"Two hours per day, maybe."

"Cleaning, dressing, personal hygiene?"

"Uh, about one," said Julian.

"Now, counting travel time, how many hours per day do you give to making a living?"

"Monday through Friday, about ten each day and then sometimes five on Saturday."

"Okay, Mr. Smith, I want you to be completely honest on this next one. How much television do you watch each night?"

“Uh, well, let’s see. I guess maybe two or three hours.”

“All right, then. The following question is based on a weekly figure instead of daily. How much time do you devote to spiritual matters?”

“You mean like going to church, prayer, and stuff like that?”

“Yes, Mr. Smith.”

“Umm, three maybe.”

“Well, let me get the old computer up and running here. According to these calculations, from a time perspective, you have earned a whopping 1.79% return on your Creator’s investment in you. In comparison, let’s see, television has earned, oh ... giving you the benefit of the doubt, 8.3%. Eating is also 8.3%. Sleeping 29%. Need I go on?”

“Wait a minute,” countered Julian. “What about my offering every week? That could be converted to time, couldn’t it?”

“Sure. Okay, how much do you give each week?”

Julian looked around nervously, even though there was no one else in the room. Then he leaned over and whispered in Mr. Jenkins’ ear.

“That much? Well, let’s see, that raises the figure from a 1.79% to a 1.82% return on investment for the Creator.”

“What if I promise to do better? Like giving more money and more time? Will that do anything?”

“Well, those are noble gestures, indeed,” replied Mr. Jenkins. “But I’m afraid their potential for getting you out of this hole is almost nil. Let me show you a couple of other things. You are forty-eight. This chart shows you the life expectancy of humans two-hundred years ago. You wouldn’t have much time left if you had lived back then, would you? Now this next chart shows the life expectancy of humans today. It would appear you have quite a few years still to go, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, thankfully,” said Julian.

“Ah, but here’s the kicker. In order to analyze these types of charts properly, you must use the Co-Inflationary Time Indexing Factor to get an accurate comparison. If we use that, you should have been dead last year ... However, just to get a dollars and cents handle on this, let’s assume you live for thirty more years. Because of the negative compounded interest bias, even if you worked for your Creator twenty-four hours a day, every day of those

thirty remaining years, you wouldn't even be able to scratch the surface of the debt you owe.”

Sinking lower in his chair, Julian pleaded, “Isn't there anything I can do?”

Sizing up the man before him, Mr. Jenkins said, “I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to let you speak to our financial aid counselor.”

“Do you really think he can help me?”

“Well, I've seen some miserable wretches go into his office and come out totally changed and renewed.”

“Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.”

Julian walked over to the financial aid office. He knocked on the door and waited. When a voice said, “Come in”, he opened the door and went inside. As soon as he closed the door behind him, the entire room became engulfed in an exceedingly bright light.

“I'm sorry, it's so bright, I can't really see you,” said Julian. “Mr. Jenkins sent me over here to see if you could give me some financial counseling and perhaps a little help with debt reduction.”

Approximately fifteen minutes later, Julian Smith walked out of the financial aid counselor's

office with a marked bounce in his pace. He went back to the clerk that waited on him when he first came into the payroll office.

“Yes, may I help you?” the clerk asked.

“I’m sure you remember me. I was here earlier, you know, the one with the problem you had to call Mr. Jenkins about.”

“Sure, Mr. Smith,” she said. “Did you get things worked out?”

“Yes, I did. My debt’s paid in full, and here’s my receipt from the financial aid counselor. So, I’m here to start over.”

Standing and extending her hand, Mary said, “Congratulations, Mr. Smith. Just take your papers over to the cashier.”

Julian walked over to the cashier’s office and waited in line. When his turn came, he walked inside, closed the door, and presented his payroll papers and his red-stamped, paid-in-full receipt.

“Mr. Smith, would you please stand over here on this line,” said James, the cashier.

The cashier then pulled a tape measure from his pocket and began to take Julian’s physical

measurements. First, he measured his height and then the width of his shoulders.

“Hey, what’s going on?” asked Julian. “I thought I had this all cleared up.”

“Relax, Mr. Smith,” said the cashier. “Under the Financial Aid Counselor’s program, everyone gets a new set of clothes to wear.”