



Working Heartily for the Lord!

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

(Colossians 3:23)

At this time many of you are probably finishing up your summer job and making preparations for another year of school. Others of you might already be working in a particular vocation. Often we can become so busy in the particulars of life that we lose sight of the overall purpose. The apostle Paul, in Colossians 3:23, gives an overarching perspective we need in life: *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.*

Paul's purpose in this short epistle of Colossians (and I encourage you to read it in its entirety) is to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this your primary goal in life? Do you live, work and play to give all to the Lord? This, of course, is not our natural tendency, but this desire grows by grace. This God-centeredness can only flow from a heart that has been renewed by the Spirit of God. Our natural tendency is to look after ourselves, rather than seeking God's glory! This all begins to change when we have come to Christ in faith. That's what Paul has been explaining in this short epistle. In chapter 2 the apostle has explained that a Christ-focused life is rooted in union with the Lord Jesus. Then in chapters 3 and 4 he unfolds the implications of that salvation for our life, including the work of our daily vocation.

When you ask someone today: *Why do you go to work every day?* They are likely to respond: So that I get paid! Many people see their daily work as an impediment to their recreational time. Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker:

'I owe, I owe, so off to work I go.'

They are saying that the main reason they work is to pay their debts. Now it is a good thing to retire your debts, but is that the main reason that we ought to work? Others consider their job as a necessary evil which is simply to be tolerated. They look to the 'week-end' so that they have some 'recreational' time. This is especially true in our entertainment-driven culture which promotes this man-centered type of living. *Many work so that they might rest* when actually the Bible teaches that *we must rest so that we can work!* In fact, the Bible teaches that we are to do all things *to the Lord!* The context of our text in Colossians shows that Paul is speaking particularly of our daily work when he states: *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men.* From this text we learn what our attitude should be towards our daily work.

We learn that the *Christian should do all his work heartily for the Lord!* Work isn't primarily about us, but about the Lord! We live in such a self-centered egotistic age that we tend to think there is something wrong if the universe isn't revolving around us! But all things must lead to God's praise, God's glory, and God's honour! That's the reason you and I exist! We live to bring glory to the name of our God. Everything we do must be unto him! Everything we do only receives meaning in its relation to the Lord! Without him it is all meaningless! In fact this is the main point of the book of Ecclesiastes. Whenever we try to find meaning in life apart from the Lord the only conclusion we can come to is that all is vain! (Ecclesiastes 12:8) However, our text teaches us that we are to look at everything in relationship to the Lord including our daily work. That's true if you are planting corn; changing the transmission in your car; building a house; teaching school; attending school as a student; or preaching from the pulpit. Everything we are – everything we do – must flow out of a relationship with the Lord. That's because everything is ultimately to lead to God's glory!

You see, to do all this heartily as to the Lord means to recognize that all our gifts – all our abilities – have come from Him for His praise! We have been given the gifts and graces we possess to serve Him. We are to serve Him for what He has given us. It means that I acknowledge that I have been given certain talents in a particular field – and all of you have received talents in some area – to serve him. You remember the parable of the talents, don't you? And what were those who received talents from the Lord to do? They were called to serve Him with them! What capacities did God give to you? Did He give you mechanical abilities? As a little boy did you like to take things apart, and then learn to put them back together? Use that gift! Did He give to you an exceptional gift in music? Use it to the praise of God! Has He given you gifts in teaching? Then teach having the *fear of God* as the basis of that teaching! Acknowledge the Lord in those gifts and use them in his service!

Our text is asking us: Am I concerned first about God's honour and glory? Is my first concern, not that which benefits me, but that what acknowledges Him? Am I living for the service of God in his kingdom? Am I following God's will or am I following my own will? Am I acknowledging Him in all my ways? What is the attitude of your heart in making the choices you have or are making? Is it because you wish to serve the Lord in your life – or are you seeking to serve yourself? Are you using the gifts God has given to you to their fullest capacity? Are you entering into an area where you can be of the most service unto the Lord? By asking these questions – searching the scriptures – praying for wisdom – seeking council our parents and teachers – you can then see where the Lord would have you serve in his kingdom!

Therefore young people, in regards to the vocation you choose the questions you ask are not first of all: *Will I make a lot of money? Will I have power? Will others think highly of me? Will I be able afford a nice car?* But rather seek the Lord's guidance – consider the gifts that God has given to you – and then you are to contemplate the needs of His kingdom! Is that what you have done in deciding what you will be doing next year, whether at school or on the jobsite? Have you acknowledged the Lord in that decision you have made in your life? My experience with young people is that they often settle for something with which they will be comfortable – rather than what God would have them to do with their life!

What the apostle is saying is that we are to work for the Lord rather than man. He is our Master; He is our Employer! Our Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over all, and also our work! Our work is a calling; a vocation. He wants you to manifest his Lordship in all that you do! Martin Luther said:

"A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God."

If God calls you to be a farmer, you are to be the best farmer you possibly can be. If God calls you to be a university professor you are to do so with all your heart. When God calls you to a particular vocation serve Him *heartily*! Our text calls us to give whole-hearted service in the Lord's work in whatever place he has put you!

... 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.

Colossians 3:15-17

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