

## **Working hard to Live as those made alive in Christ...** (focus on 23-25)

### **Colossians 3: 1-25**

*<sup>1</sup> Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

*<sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

*<sup>7</sup> You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. <sup>8</sup> But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices*

*<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

#### *Instructions for Christian Households*

*<sup>18</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

*<sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

*<sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

*<sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

*<sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. <sup>23</sup> **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.***

Labor Day has been an American federal holiday since 1894, and falls annually on the first Monday of September. Other than Sodas, Brats, and BBQs, which has been pushed by the commercial industry in this nation for generations, Labor Day signifies the end of Summer, and the beginning of the fall season for many American families.

It is a holiday unlike any other, as it celebrates and upholds American laborers, hard work, and traditional values of "The American Dream". Ah, the "American Dream."

You see, one thing that makes the United States unique from the rest of the world, is the opportunity presented to those who work hard toward a goal, often with manual labor, have found they can break generational poverty, and discovering success, or what most would call success. People have for generations, sought to come to America to discover the dream they have long searched for in life.

In his 1931 book *“Lesson Plan: The American Dream”*, historian James Truslow Adams wrote *“life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.”* It is with this famous quote that the idea of Labor Day comes to life.

Labor Day is a holiday celebrated across America, and originated during a bleak and tumultuous series of events in the late 1800s. As I remember from my history studies, it was during the Industrial Revolution in the 1800s. Labor laws were ill-defined (*or non-existent*) and families often worked 12, or more hours, every day, to provide for their families. That may not be as common as it once was.

Working conditions were often harsh with poorly ventilated mines and factories, and little to no access to basic facilities. The common workplace pandemonium for adults and children was much the same, sometimes for those as young as 5 years old.

During the height of poor American workplace conditions, labor unions gained a greater footing than they had in previous years. It was during this time in history, where our nation found more successfully organized strikes and rallies intended to push back against worker wages and poor workplace conditions.

Some of the most notable strikes turned quite violent, including the Haymarket Riot in 1886. It was during the time period of these strikes and marches that the inaugural *“Labor Day Parade”* occurred; where over 10,000 workers marched from City Hall to Union Square in New York City on September 5, 1882.

This was a pivotal moment in American history, and was the official beginning of *“Labor Day”*. It wasn't until 1894 that Labor Day was recognized as an official federal holiday. Still, many years after that fateful march, the United States recognizes a day each year in September to commemorate the labor movement, and the freedoms found in the United States, surrounding workplace conditions, labor laws, workman's wages, and more.

How we as children of the Lord do our work is of great importance. We read in Ephesians 6:7-8, *“<sup>7</sup>Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.”*

Many people have memories of that one job that just wasn't easy to work, whether it was the job itself, the supervisor, the conditions, the location, or something else entirely. Paul the Apostle writes, in a specific historical context, in his letter to the Colossians and Ephesians, during a time that slaves (*or bondservants*) served their earthly masters, and he calls them to do so as though they are working directly for God himself. Not simply for man.

It can be difficult for Americans to read these scriptures in their appropriate context because we have a lot of history in our country (*e.g. The Civil War, and other events*) that can cause us to see this through a much different lens than that of a slave/master relationship.

For many, most of the memories they hold are considered bad, wrong or intolerable, especially in today's context, even though at that time, it was the norm in this nation's culture and setting. However, in the Biblical context, the slave working for their master would have been a bit closer to our modern day understanding of an employee working for their employer.

If Paul were writing to us directly today, he might phrase this passage this way, ***“Whatever job you have, work at it with all your heart, as though you’re working for God himself, not for your supervisor, or CEO, or for the bottom line, or even just to get a paycheck.”***

If we, as God's children, approach our job roles, whatever we might do, with the mindset and attitude Paul suggests, we will truly be the ***“city on a hill”*** (Matthew 5:14) for those who are working around us.

People will notice our Christian values, when we serve with duty and loyalty, as though working for the Lord. This is what this passage is speaking of.

Let's start at the beginning of this scripture...

### **First ~ Raised with Christ**

*“<sup>3</sup> Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

*<sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory...”*

Paul speaks to us as though we have accepted Jesus as Lord, and we are intending to live as a Christian. I PRAY THIS IS THE CASE.... If this is truly our desire, then he says, focus on the right way of life, and place your mind upon Godly things. Fix our minds on things above... On Him!

I was thinking about what we concentrate on as we drive, or go, to work? What do we often think about during that time? How about after we get there and checked in? Do our thoughts even go anywhere near thinking of God? Thinking that we are on our way to serve Him? Or are we thinking of our coworkers, the schedule, our boss, the work load and when do I get off work, even prior to starting?

Paul says, we need to intentionally set our mind on ***“things above.”*** Think about God, Jesus and His leading in our lives. His love, His grace and how He would be pleased by what we say and are doing.

We are told to stop thinking about worldly things, and focus on Him and His will for us right now. Why? We are no longer tied directly to this world and its philosophies, we are now tied to Him and His teaching. Isn't that correct?

So we are to direct our minds toward Him and what He is doing in and through us, and for us. If we truly wish to labor for His glory, it starts here.

*“<sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **(Where is our life?)** <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory...”* Be living for Him every day because He will appear soon.

## **Secondly ~ How are we dressed for work?**

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

I know that every one of us, after we finally get up in the morning, get dress prior to going to work. **At least I pray that is so.** Many of us even think about what we will wear, as it needs to fit into the office or work place for that day. After all, most of us do not want to stand out like a sore thumb, do we? We want to wear something that will allow us to do the work we are hired to accomplish to the best of our ability. So, Paul says, you need to get dressed to do our work for the Lord as well. So what clothing does He suggest we wear?

The clothing includes: **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** Ok, look closely at this clothing, it may not be natural for us to wear these, prior to inviting Christ to be your Lord, but like many do we go shopping and obtain new clothing for the job. Paul offers us some power clothing we need to ware for this job.

I have found that if we ware it for a while and it grows on you. It even gets better and stronger. Not only will you get use to it, it helps to make you a better worker and servant. It will allow us to bear with each other when we disagree, more forgiving when we accidentally offend or hurt someone and ready to serve as He calls us to sever. At the core of this clothing is one element which will help keep us together, even when we find that we don’t agree on everything, kind of like in a family, and that is LOVE. God’s love and Grace.

Paul says, when you get out of bed, to get ready to go to work, dress accordingly. Dress with Godly cloths so we can do the work of the kingdom we are created to do. This doesn’t happen by accident it happens with intention.

### **Illustration:**

*It’s much like my wife picking out my clothes on most Sundays so we match or so others know we are together. Or, so I look the best I can.*

## **Third ~ For whom and how do we work?**

*“<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” <sup>23</sup> **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,** <sup>24</sup> **since you know that you will***

*receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*  
***<sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.***

When we work, Paul says, ***“Work as if you are working for the Lord.”*** May I ask a simple question? ***“How many of us really seek to dress as the Lord asks us to every morning?”*** Let’s be honest...

What might this mean for us? To dress accordingly? All of us work for someone or something? Some even work for themselves, and that can be good or bad at times. That depends our ability to be self-motivated. That my friends is difficult for most.

Paul starts off with, ***“whatever you do, whether in WORD or in DEED, that means in what we say and how we do things, the tasks are called or given to do, do it in the name of the Lord. Now, that doesn’t mean we can do things poorly or with evil in our hearts and minds, then say “the Lord made me do it.”*** The assumption made here is that we understand that our words and deeds are to bring glory to God, all the time. We are to give God our thanks for His love and grace to empower us as we do these things.

The focus I wanted us to look at today is found in verses 23-25; ***<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.***

Here is this statement again, ***“Whatever you do,”*** calling attention to everything we do every day, thus;

**1)work at it with all your heart...** The Lord is not pleased with a half way effort. The world we live in often does what is needed to simply get by. That is not what the Lord is asking from us. He wants our best effort as we work for Him. YOUR best, not my best!

**2)working for the Lord...** the paycheck we are working for in the kingdom of God is not signed by any man, it is signed by God Himself. Everything we do, for every part of our work in the church, in our homes, in our neighborhood, represents Him, not us alone. When we wear the tag, we are to lift Him up by how we live for Him in everything. We work for Him!

**3)Why do we need to give our best?** ***<sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving...*** Our God has a special inheritance for all who accept Him and give of their best unto the master. Similar to what we hope for from our earthly bosses, only worth so much more, our Lord has something special for each and every one of us.

**4)A warning for those who try to cut corners...** ***<sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.*** It doesn’t matter who we are, if we chose to do things incorrectly, there is a cost. Paul says, “Don’t intentionally do things you know you shouldn’t do to simply get by.”

The Lord wants to celebrate with us the good work we do for His name and Glory. That is why he has a reward for us.

So, this Labor Day let's think about

- **Whose we are** - we are His child
- **Who we are really working for** – we work for Him – not man
- **How hard will we work** – at whatever we are doing give our best
- **Not just getting by** – do not cut corners or we will pay the price

***Working hard to Live as those made alive in Christ...***

***Are we alive – if we are then live like it.***

Closing Prayer: