

WORK AS UNTO THE LORD

A Five-Day Devotional in Colossians 3:22 – 4:1

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward."

Colossians 3:23–24

DAY 1

The Lord of Every Room

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:18–4:1; Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 5:22–6:9

Paul does not ease into this. By the time he reaches Colossians 3:22, he has already told the Colossians who they are: raised with Christ, hidden in God, clothed in compassion and humility and love. He has told them to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly. And then he turns to the household. To wives and husbands. To children and fathers. And now to servants and masters.

The structure is deliberate. This is not a social manual for Roman households. It is the gospel applied to every human relationship and every ordinary place. Paul's logic is relentless: if Christ is Lord, then Christ is Lord here too. In the kitchen. At the workbench. In the office. In whatever arrangement of authority and responsibility you find yourself in today.

This matters because we are all prone to compartmentalization. We arrive at worship with our best spiritual faces on, and then we clock in on Monday as if Christ had stayed behind at church. We treat devotion and work as two separate categories, two different rooms with different rules. But Paul will not allow it. The same Christ who is the image of the invisible God and the head of the church is also the one before whom every laborer will give account. There is no square inch of your life over which he does not say, 'Mine.'

The good news is that this is not merely a claim of obligation. Christ's lordship is the foundation of your dignity, your security, and your ultimate freedom. Because he owns it all, no employer or supervisor or difficult circumstance has the final word over you. You work under a higher authority. That changes everything about how you carry yourself through an ordinary day.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you most struggle to see Christ as Lord? At work, at home, in your daily routine?
2. What does it mean practically that the gospel is meant to shape every room of your life, not just Sunday mornings?
3. How does knowing Christ is Lord of your ordinary life give you both accountability and freedom?

TODAY'S APPLICATION: *Before your day begins today, name one specific context, a workplace, a relationship, a responsibility, where you have not been thinking of yourself as someone who answers to Christ. Ask him to reframe that place for you.*

A PRAYER: *Father, I confess I am better at confessing your lordship in church than I am at living it out on a Tuesday. I bring my worship on Sunday and then take it back on Monday. Forgive me for treating your authority over my life as partial. Help me to see today that there is no ordinary moment that sits outside your reign. You are Lord of my work, my relationships, my time, and my energy. Teach me to live that way, not as a burden but as freedom. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 2

More Than an Act

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:22; Matthew 6:1–6; 1 Samuel 16:7; Galatians 1:10

Paul gives a command in verse 22, and then immediately tells you what he does not want: obey not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers. He knows how we work. He knows how you work. Left to ourselves, our obedience tends to be performance-based, calibrated to who is watching and what impression we need to make.

Eye-service is not laziness. It might actually look like hard work when the boss is in the room. Eye-service is obedience that exists entirely as a function of external pressure.

When the pressure is on, you perform. When no one is watching, you coast. The problem Paul identifies is not the outward behavior but the engine behind it: a heart that is fundamentally oriented toward human approval rather than toward God.

The alternative Paul sets against eye-service is striking. Obey with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Not fearing your employer. Not fearing consequences. Fearing the Lord, which in the biblical sense means living in conscious awareness that you stand before a God who sees what no one else sees and who cares about what no one else can measure. Your effort when no one is looking. Your attitude when the work is tedious. Your integrity when cutting a corner would be easy.

This is liberating, actually. You are not performing for an audience of critics. You are not trying to manage the impressions of people who may not even notice. You are working before one who knows your heart, has purchased you at great cost, and calls your ordinary faithfulness worship. The fear of the Lord drives out the exhausting, endless fear of man.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Be honest: does your effort at work or at home change depending on who is watching? What does that tell you?
2. What is the difference between fearing the Lord and fearing consequences? How does each one shape behavior differently?
3. How might 'sincerity of heart' look different from outward compliance in your specific situation this week?

TODAY'S APPLICATION: *Identify one task today that you would normally do differently if no one were watching. Do it with the same care you would give if you knew Christ himself was observing. Because he is.*

A PRAYER: *Lord, you know the difference between what I do and why I do it, even when I don't. I confess that I am more concerned with human approval than I like to admit. I manage impressions. I perform when it counts and slack when it doesn't. Forgive me. Give me a heart that fears you genuinely, not as dread but as the settled awareness that I live before your eyes. Let that awareness make me faithful in small things, honest in hidden things, and free from the exhausting need to be seen by everyone else. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 3

A Better Paycheck

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:23–24; Romans 8:17; Hebrews 11:24–26; 1 Corinthians 15:58

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. Paul is not describing the gifted and the called. He is not addressing people with fascinating, meaningful careers. He is writing to servants in a first-century Roman household, people with minimal legal standing, limited options, and work that no one would describe as fulfilling. And he tells them: work heartily.

The word behind heartily is the Greek word for soul. Work from the soul. Put yourself into it. Not because the work is glamorous. Not because your employer deserves it. Not because you will be recognized. But because the person you are ultimately working for is the Lord Christ, and he is worth your best effort on your worst day.

Paul adds a motivation that reframes everything: knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. An inheritance. This is covenant language. Paul is pointing servants who owned nothing under Roman law to a promised possession that no earthly authority can grant or take away. The reward is not a bonus tied to your performance review. It is an inheritance, given by the Father to his children, secured not by your output but by your union with Christ.

That inheritance is the lens through which Paul wants you to see your ordinary work.

You are not a servant with no future. You are an heir doing your Father's business while you wait for the full possession of what he has promised. That is not a small thing to know on a hard day. It is the thing that allows ordinary, unglamorous, unrecognized work to carry genuine eternal weight.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What makes work feel meaningless to you? How does Paul's vision of the inheritance address that feeling?
2. What is the difference between working for a reward you earn and receiving an inheritance you are given? How does that distinction change your motivation?
3. Where in your work or daily responsibilities do you need to hear the call to 'work heartily' right now?

TODAY'S APPLICATION: *Take one routine, unremarkable task you have been doing halfheartedly, and do it today as an act of worship. Before you begin, remind yourself: this is not for them. This is for the Lord.*

A PRAYER: *Father, I confess that I often tie my effort to whether the work feels meaningful or the people around me seem to notice. When neither is true, I coast. Forgive me for losing sight of who I am ultimately working for. Help me to remember that I am your heir, and that the inheritance you have promised is not earned by impressive performance but given freely in Christ. Let that reality reach the ordinary corners of my day. Make me someone who works from the soul, for you, even when no one else is watching. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 4

The Master Who Sees Justly

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:25–4:1; Romans 2:6–11; Deuteronomy 10:17; Ephesians 6:9

The passage turns sharply in verse 25. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Paul has just spent three verses building motivation from grace and inheritance. Now he presses the other side of the same reality: the Lord who promises reward also promises justice. He is not merely an encouraging employer handing out bonuses. He is a judge who sees clearly and shows no favoritism.

This word was meant to cut both ways. To the servant tempted to wrong his master quietly, cutting corners or stealing small things when nothing seemed to be at risk: God sees. To the master tempted to use his power unjustly, mistreating those beneath him because the social structure would let him get away with it: God sees. The impartiality of God is a threat to the powerful and a comfort to the powerless. It is both at once.

Paul addresses masters directly in 4:1. Treat your servants justly and fairly. The reason is the same one he has given throughout: you also have a Master in heaven. The person with authority in an earthly structure is not exempt from accountability. They are simply accountable to a higher court. No title, no position, no advantage conferred by wealth or status changes the fact that every person who holds power over others will give account to the one who holds all power.

This is a passage for those who have been wronged and received no justice in this life. It is also a passage for those of us who hold any kind of authority, however small. The Judge who sees without partiality is not a threat to the person who has learned to fear him rightly. He is the only guarantee that justice will ultimately be done. And all of that justice rests on the one who took the sentence we deserved upon himself.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are you currently in a situation where you have been wronged and there has been no earthly resolution? How does the impartiality of God speak to that?
2. In what areas of authority or influence do you hold power over others? How should the reality of a Master in heaven shape how you use that power?
3. How does the fact that Christ bore God's judgment on our behalf change how you relate to the warning of verse 25?

TODAY'S APPLICATION: *If you hold any position of authority, over employees, children, volunteers, or anyone else, take five minutes today to ask honestly: Am I treating those under my care with the justice and fairness that I will one day answer for? If correction is needed, make it.*

A PRAYER: *Lord, I am grateful that you are not partial. I am also sobered by it. I know there are places where I have used the small authority I hold carelessly, and places where I have*

been wronged and tried to take justice into my own hands. Help me to trust you as the judge who sees everything I see and everything I don't. Where I need to repent of injustice, give me courage to do it. Where I need to release bitterness over wrongs done to me, give me the faith to leave those things in your hands. You are just. That is enough. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 5

The Servant Who Is Also Lord

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:22–4:1; Philippians 2:5–11; Mark 10:42–45; Hebrews 12:2

By the end of this passage, one figure stands over all of it. He is called the Lord Christ in verse 24. He is the Master in heaven in 4:1. He is the one before whom both servant and master will stand. He is the standard, the judge, the reward, and the reason. And here is what makes the whole passage possible: he is the one who did what the passage calls us to do, perfectly, and in our place.

Paul writes in Philippians 2 that Christ, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. The word is *doulos*. The same word used in Colossians 3:22. Christ took up the position the world regards as the lowest and most expendable, and he occupied it with complete sincerity of heart, doing his Father's will with nothing held back, for the joy set before him.

This is why the command to work heartily as for the Lord is not finally a burden. It is an invitation to imitate the one who has already shown us what it looks like and has given us his Spirit to make it possible. You are not trying to earn your standing before God through faithful work. Your standing is already secured in the one who served faithfully on your behalf. You work from that secure place, not toward it.

A life shaped by this passage looks like someone who is genuinely free. Free from the exhausting need for human approval. Free from bitterness when work goes unrecognized. Free from the abuse of authority because they know they answer to a higher court. Free to give their best to unglamorous work because they know their inheritance does not depend on their employer's opinion of them. That freedom has a name. It is grace. And it arrives in the person of the Lord Christ, who was himself a servant, and who is now Lord of all.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing that Christ himself took the form of a servant change how you view your own ordinary, unglamorous work?
2. What would it look like to live this week as someone whose security comes from Christ rather than from recognition, approval, or results?
3. Looking back over this week's devotional: which day pressed hardest on your conscience? What do you need to do about it?

TODAY'S APPLICATION: *Share one thing you have learned this week from Colossians 3:22 through 4:1 with someone in your household or church. Doctrine shared in community takes deeper root than doctrine held privately.*

A PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, you are the Lord of every room, the judge of every heart, the inheritance of every saint, and the servant who gave himself completely. I am undone by the*

fact that the one calling me to work heartily is the one who worked with more sincerity and more cost than I will ever be asked to match. Thank you for securing what I could not earn. Help me to live from that security this week: at work, at home, in every relationship where I hold responsibility or face the temptation to cut corners. Make me someone who works for an audience of one. In Jesus' name, Amen.