

Colossians 3:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Paul universalizes the principle. "Whatsoever ye do" (ho ean poiēte, ὃ ἔὰν ποιῆτε) encompasses all work without exception. "Do it heartily" (ek psychēs ergazesthe, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε) literally means "work from the soul"—wholeheartedly, with full energy and commitment, not grudgingly or halfheartedly.

"As to the Lord, and not unto men" (hōs tō Kyriō kai ouk anthrōpois, ὡς τῷ Κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις) reframes work's ultimate audience. Human employers are immediate authorities, but Christ is ultimate Master. This transforms even menial or unpleasant tasks into sacred service. Poor or cruel bosses can't diminish work's significance when offered to Christ. This doctrine revolutionizes work ethic, providing motivation transcending circumstances or recognition.

Historical Context

Ancient world divided humanity into those who worked (slaves, manual laborers—despised) and leisured elite (philosophers, politicians—honored). Christianity dignified all honest work as service to Christ, regardless of social status or task's nature. This attracted working-class converts and transformed Christian communities into economically diverse bodies where manual laborers worshiped alongside wealthy members as equals before Christ.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How would your work quality, attitude, and diligence change if you truly worked for Christ, not humans?
2. What work tasks do you do grudgingly or halfheartedly that you should do 'heartily as to the Lord'?
3. How can you maintain excellent work ethic despite difficult circumstances, unreasonable demands, or lack of appreciation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	πᾶν	ὅ	τι	ἐὰν	ποιῆτε	ἐκ	ψυχῆς
And	whatsoever	G3739	G5100	G1437	ye do	it heartily	G5590
G2532	G3956				G4160	G1537	

ἐργάζεσθε	ώς	τῷ	κυρίῳ	καὶ	οὐκ	ἀνθρώποις
do	as	G3588	to the Lord	And	not	unto men
G2038	G5613		G2962	G2532	G3756	G444

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:17 (References Lord): 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.

Romans 14:8 (References Lord): For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

2 Chronicles 31:21 (Parallel theme): And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (Parallel theme): Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

1 Peter 2:15 (Parallel theme): For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Psalms 119:10 (Parallel theme): With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

1 Peter 2:13 (References Lord): Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

1 Peter 1:22 (Parallel theme): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Romans 14:6 (References Lord): He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Psalms 119:34 (Parallel theme): Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.