

A New Passion for Work

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[0:00] Well, we've reached our last lesson on this series in work, and today's lesson is entitled A New Passion for Work. Colossians 3.23 says, whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.

Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart. So I have a question for you as we begin. What does it mean, what does it look like to work at something with all of your heart?

What does it mean to work at your work with all of your heart? What goes into that? What would that look like? You're keeping busy, not standing wrong, doing nothing.

Very good. You're keeping busy. What else? Stan, you have an eye for people who are working? Not working? To me, it includes seeking to please my boss, seeking to do everything with excellence.

Very good. What else? Yes? Not being obsessed with the job or workaholic, being committed to the job. Okay. Yeah, we're going to talk about that. There's a difference between being sinfully obsessed with something, but working at it to the Lord.

[1:29] What else does it look like to work at something with all of your heart? Dan. I mean, discipline to do what I'm supposed to be doing and not letting myself get distracted somehow. Yeah, discipline, focus.

What else? Scott? Well, you're doing it unto the Lord in the sense that when the boss is not there, you're still doing it like it's there. Right. Yeah, it's a motivation that doesn't come from the outside. It comes from the inside.

And so it doesn't really matter whether the boss is looking at you or not. Yes, sir? You do it willingly. You do it willingly. To do it anticipating doing it. To do it.

Yeah. Forward. Yeah. So if you play a game with all of your heart, you're looking forward to the games. People don't have to drag you to the field or to the court. You go there willingly.

Do you go to your work willingly? Yes, sir. You get there on time. All right. What else? You care about the outcome.

[2:40] So when a foundation is laid well, that's what you're looking for. If it's sloppily done, you're not satisfied with it. So working at it with all of your heart.

What are some other things that we are called to do with all of our heart? What's the first commandment? Love the Lord your God with all of your heart. And that is...

You see it in a number of ways. With all of your mind, your soul, your strength. When you do something with all of your heart, you do it with all of your faculties, your will, your strength, your emotions.

It calls for all that you are. And so Paul is saying, whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart. But God wants us to work with passion.

With enthusiasm. Excitement. Zeal. God doesn't want you to do your work without passion, without joy, without zeal, without earnestness.

[3:49] And perhaps that's a rebuke to you. I'm sure in some way it is. Because just in the same way that we don't love the Lord our God with all of our heart, we don't probably do all that we do.

All of our work with all of our heart. And so it's probably a rebuke to you. But that's not all that it is. In a certain way, it's really good news.

And I'll tell you why. Because in this frustrating world, in this world where it's full of cynicism, where people are asking, what does it matter? Why bother?

God is saying, work with all of your heart. Other people might not care. But God does care. He does care. And so you don't have to wither away under the cynicism of this age.

The cynicism that says no one cares. God says, I care. I care about your work. I want you to work with passion. With all of your heart.

[4:48] And so today we're going to talk about false passion. We're going to talk about true passion. And then we're going to talk about where does true passion come from? Where does it come from practically?

So, our first point, false passion. Is there a lot of false excitement, false enthusiasm in the work world today?

And what I mean by false is not that it's not genuine, but that it's on the wrong foundation. Well, our first point is false passion.

After finishing her residency, a young doctor was working at a New York City hospital. And she became friends with a doctor who was a few years older than she was.

And this older doctor, who was a woman, obviously, was pregnant. She was pregnant with her second child. So, this pregnant doctor friend said to this young doctor, Do you know what I love most about being pregnant?

[5:55] Now, think about that, ladies. What do you love most about being pregnant? I'm not going to ask you to answer. So, even you men, you're not ever going to be pregnant, but can you imagine what would a woman love most about being pregnant?

What do you think she's going to say? She said something very interesting. Do you know what I love most about being pregnant? I love being pregnant because it's the only time where I feel productive all of the time.

Even when I'm sleeping, I'm doing something. Now, that's very interesting. It's hard to know. The Lord knows exactly what she meant by that.

But it struck this younger MD as interesting. Her friend seemed to be relieved that finally she found something.

She found a task that she could be doing incessantly. That she never had to stop doing it. And in a way, she was happy because she finally found something that she could always do.

[7:06] Even when she wasn't doing anything else, she could do this. And she seemed to base her self-regard, if she was doing well, if she was being good or not, apparently solely on her productivity.

Her work was in some ways an attempt to say, No, I'm doing good. I'm a good person. I'm busy. Now, obviously, I don't know all that's going on in this doctor's life, and only God can judge her. But she does seem to be an example of using your work to build your worth, your security, your meaning.

Because this woman didn't look at her pregnancy as, What I love most about being pregnant is this wonderful miracle that God is doing, this chance to care for someone.

It was to work. Now, men, why do you hate it so much when people ridicule your work?

[8:11] Why do we hate it so much? Why does it bother us and upset us when people criticize our work? Is it one of the reasons that they're not just talking about our work?

They're talking about us. They aren't just criticizing the quality of our work. We don't just look at it objectively. We look at it as they're criticizing us.

They're saying something about us, about how good we are, about our value, the meaning of our life, and what we're up to. So can we have a false passion for work, a false enthusiasm for work?

Yes. We can be working very hard at our jobs, in our families, in the church, with our children, teaching, preaching, mothering, fathering, building car parts, selling products.

Whatever we do, we can be doing that. On the outside, it looks like we are doing it with great enthusiasm, and we are, but we're doing it for the wrong reasons.

[9:20] So moms, why so many times do you want your children to be saved, to be good, to be well-behaved, to do good in school, to accomplish things?

Isn't it because a lot of times that you're just thinking about how it reflects on you? It says something about you. So you can do your mothering with great earnestness and great zeal, even with biblical direction and principles, and still at least in part not be doing it because you fear the Lord, not out of reverence for the Lord, but in a pursuit of your own standing, your own good standing before God, before men, and I bet that it starts to show sometimes.

It probably shows when your children aren't doing what they're supposed to be doing, and you get depressed, or you get angry, or over-angry, because some people are trying to get a sense of self, a sense of being something or someone, of hearing that it is good.

That first thing that the Lord said about His creation when He made it. It is good. They're trying to hear that through their productivity and their success.

Some try to bring home a paycheck so they can enjoy real life, so they can enjoy Friday night, so they can have fun at the football party, or at the bar, and that, in either way, it turns work into this pointless grind, because there's always another Friday to work for, and the rest of the days can be so disappointing.

[11:03] So is there a false passion, a false excitement, a false enthusiasm out there on work? Undoubtedly. And we are blind to our own sinfulness if we don't see it in our own hearts.

That we can be doing good things for all the wrong reasons. Now, what's at the bottom of this false passion? This false excitement?

Well, self is. Yourself. Self can generate a lot of action. Self can generate a frenzy of activity, a lot of counterfeit passion.

We're afraid to fail. We're afraid of what people are going to think of us. We're afraid of what God will think of us, of how God will treat us. Things like that.

So everything is put under this cost-benefit analysis. Now, you know, in businesses, you have to judge whether you want to invest in something or not.

[12:10] Whether you want to buy new equipment, whether you want to buy or hire another employee, you have to ask, by buying this, is it going to help me in the long run?

Is it going to generate more money? Is it going to lead to profit in the long run or not? Well, in this false passion, that's how we look at life. The question that we ask ourselves is, what's in it for me? What's in it for me if I work hard? What's in it for me if I do this? And that's a question that we can bring to everything. Should I work hard today at work?

What's in it for me? Should I slack off at work today? Well, what's in it for me? Can I get away with it? Is it going to be good for me? Now, the medieval church had their seven deadly sins.

And I don't totally agree with the whole idea, but they meant something very specific about these seven deadly sins. Theologically, a deadly sin was believed to destroy the life of faith in an individual.

[13:25] Now, that's not saying something about perseverance. It's just to say that these sins, when they got wrapped around your heart, it destroyed your faith.

It worked directly against your faith and against the life of grace in your life. Now, one of these mortal sins was something called a sadia.

Sadia. And it's commonly called, translated, sloth. Sloth. But it doesn't capture the whole of it. It's not laziness, per se, that is at the heart of the sin.

A sadia is the spirit that says, what's in it for me? What's in it for me? Sometimes it results in sloth. Sometimes it results in doing nothing.

And a lot of times, underneath a spirit of depression and despair and doubt is the selfishness that has been asking, what's in it for me?

[14:30] What's in it for me? All the time. Dorothy Sayers wrote about a sadia, and she said this, sadia is the sin which believes in nothing. It cares for nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there's nothing for which it will die.

We have known it far too well for many years. The only thing perhaps we have not known about it is it's a mortal sin. It loves nothing, hates nothing, cares for nothing. It will love and hate a lot of things superficially, but it won't love or hate anything for itself's sake, for its own sake.

So it won't love something for its own sake. It will love something if it's good for it, for him. Or it'll hate something if it's bad for him because it's always asking what's in it for me?

And that's, I think it's this hard the spirit that is at the heart of so much of the false passion that we see out in the world. People are enthusiastic about their work.

A lot of people are. But it's because of the spirit of self. Now what's interesting is this selfishness doesn't just result in sloth.

[15:57] It results, a lot of times, it doesn't look lazy at all. Sometimes it generates a lot of activity. You see, because at the bottom of it, it's this empty heart that doesn't know God, doesn't know Jesus Christ, doesn't know what it's like to be loved by him and cared for by him.

It's an empty heart without love for anything outside of itself, with no love for God. So listen to what Sayers wrote regarding this.

It's one of the favorite tricks of this sin to disassemble itself, to masquerade itself under a cover of activity. We think that if we're busily rushing about and doing things, we can't be suffering from sloth, from asadia.

And besides, violent activity seems to offer us escape from the horrors of it. So the other sins hasten to provide a cloak for sloth, for asadia.

Gluttony offers a whirl of dancing and dining and sports and dashing very fast from place to place to gape at beauty spots. Do you get it?

[17:09] So they're always looking for a new, beautiful, wonderful experience. And when they get there and when we get to them, we defile them with our vulgarity and our waste.

Do you ever, and this is going to happen with Christmas. People are going to go and they're going to, they're looking for some experience. And they get to the Christmas feast and it comes up empty and they defile it with their vulgarity, with their profanity.

Covetousness rakes us out on a, rakes us out of bed at an early hour in order that we may put pep and hustle into our busyness. Envy sets us to gossip and to scandal.

Wrath provides the argument that the only fitting activity in the world so full of evildoers and evil demons is to curse loudly and incessantly. And lust provides a round of dreary promiscuity that passes for bodily vigor.

But all these are disguises for the empty heart and the empty brain and the empty soul of Asadia. Now, in short, Asadia puts that cynical self that says, no one cares, it doesn't really matter, I'm at the center, it puts that at our, at the middle of us and the result is a whirlwind of activity.

[18:30] And so there we could be. We're angry at what's happening and so there we go. we dash off an angry letter to the editors. Or we're going from place to place, busy, busy.

We're doing all of our, all of what we do because of ourselves. And so you can work really hard because of envy to get ahead of someone.

You can work really hard because of pride to prove that you're better than others. because you want pleasure. And it's this false passion that's at the heart of so much that passes for zeal today out in the work world.

People are empty. And so they're working and they're working and they're working to fill up what's empty in them. And they do it in a hundred different ways.

But then sometimes and eventually this sin usually ends up looking like depression and despair. And it usually comes and it happens a lot of times after we've tried and we've tried to fill up our heart to justify ourselves.

[19:43] We've tried with all this activity and it's failed because in it all we've never come to God. We've never believed in Jesus Christ. We don't know or feel God's love or God's grace and so we say what's the point?

I've tried it all. There's nothing else to try. And so at the end this false passion ends in despair. Now what's the alternative?

What's the alternative to what is going on out in the world? Paul says whatever you do work at it with all of your heart. there is a true passion. There is a passion that does employ all that we are for the right reasons instead of the wrong reasons.

And we see it in our second point this true passion. Turn to Romans chapter 12 verse 1. Romans chapter 12 verse 1.

And here Paul advocates for true passion for enthusiasm in our life.

[21:01] Just because we don't want to do what all the world is doing and running after passion for the wrong reasons doesn't mean we don't want passion.

So Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual act of worship.

Now do you see the real passion here? Paul is using temple language. He's using language and ideas from the Old Testament temple and he wants us to think about the worshiper as he comes to God with his offering.

Now what is this offering? He's not talking about a sin offering. He's not talking about an offering that we give because of sin but instead he's talking about a burnt offering.

The burnt offering in the Old Testament was the way a worshiper showed total and absolute commitment. the whole animal the whole body of the animal was burnt.

[22:15] It was offered wholly completely to God and it was a significant it showed what was in the worshiper's heart. The worshiper is saying I can't crawl up on this sacrifice and be burned but God I want to give you all that I am and that's what Paul is saying in light of God's mercy give him all that you are and you do it even as you live our whole lives are meant to be a sacrifice and so do you see how all consuming this is our work our relationships our marriages our children our houses all that we are Paul says offer them to God so this isn't disinterested worship this isn't worship in part in light of God's mercy offer your whole body all that you are to

God that's the passion that God wants you to give him in your living that's the passion the enthusiasm that should mark your work because it should mark your whole life now what does that look like well we talked about some of what it looked like at the beginning Paul gives us some very specific ideas as the rest of the chapter goes on as he shows what it looks like to offer your bodies as living sacrifices and I want to just look down at verse 11 and he says never be lacking in zeal never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord so never be lacking in zeal keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord zeal here's the definition for this

Greek word speed that is by implication dispatch eagerness earnestness busyness earnest carefulness diligent forwardness haste now that's several ideas zeal eagerness speed fervency but there's also care and diligence zeal is not running like a maniac running after the wind it's running hard but it's running with focus it's not urgency without focus but it's not diligence and care without speed it's both demands all that we are our mind our body our vigor our hearts our emotions so what should mark our work zeal diligence careful speed now where does that come from where does that come from it comes from 12:1 says in view of God's mercy in light of God's mercy what enables us to work with true passion not that emptiness not the empty heart that we talked about before but God's mercy so what is that what's the answer to that inner emptiness that we saw as the source of all that sloth and all that frantic idolatrous effort that we talked about earlier it's God's mercy there's only one thing that can fill up an empty soul and it's the grace of God and so when we when I see

Jesus and I see that Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice and he was the ultimate burnt offering and he did that for me because so many times in my life I haven't done it for God he did it in my place he suffered and he sacrificed himself for me when his passion and the full sense of that word I mean his pain for us his enthusiasm his love his excitement and view of God's mercy when that captures my imagination then I want to work for him I'm supposed to be looking at that and as I look at that I am supposed to be zealous and serving the Lord now so now I can quit doing my work to fill up my own heart to say to stop shoring up my own identity and say oh I'm a good person look at my work or look at me

I'm an alright person I'm doing okay look at what I'm doing I can finally leave all that all that self-centered work behind and serve the Lord because ultimately no matter what that empty heart looks like on the outside it's all about serving self and only when Jesus takes the center of our lives do we actually start serving him now now I don't do my work out of a sense of need out of a sense of emptiness but I do it out of a sense of fullness so when Colossians 3:23 says work at it with all of your heart there's another idea that runs through the whole book of Colossians and it's the idea of fullness Christ is the fullness of God and you've received fullness in him there's this idea of fullness that runs through it and so when that fullness fills me up when Christ fills me up then I am able to do my work with all my heart so I

[28:25] I go to work thinking about God's mercy to me God's love for me I go to work with a sense of his love his affection his grace and so I offer my body to him I don't have to keep anything back for myself I don't have to keep anything back for myself because I have fullness in him so as Roman this mercy that Paul is talking about in Romans 12:1 just think about some of the ideas that Paul has already talked about in the book of Romans that we see God's mercy I have the spirit of Christ living in me where does my fullness come from experientially it comes from the spirit of God living in me and bringing Christ to me I have life through the spirit I have the spirit of adoption instead of the spirit of slavery to fear

I have a future hope of glory I have help to pray I have forgiveness of my sins I stand in a place of grace love love love love remember the end of Romans 8 he's talking about what can separate us from the love of God nothing nothing can separate me from that love so how do we work with passion we bring all of that to work with us we go to work viewing God's mercy now I have a question for you how would viewing God's mercy help you at your work or let me ask it this way how

has it helped you at your work can you give me some practical ways that you work differently now because

Jesus has mercy on you and the spirit is with you and you have grace and you have mercy in Christ what are some ways that that has worked itself out in your life there!

yeah! and you! you work for the Lord and people who work with misunderstand or judge or wrong you God's spirit is so quick to remind us that we provide the grace of God and only you know then we can forgive them because he's forgiven us so much and not let it impact our work or discouragement yeah so do you ever have to deal with criticism or deal with slights or misunderstandings at your work well how do you get over those things how do you work through them with the gospel someone had their hand up over here yeah Dale it's easy to criticize some a laborer for something they failed in the Lord has been very faithful to show me my!

failures! so that curves the criticism and the ill feeling yeah realizing I am capable of exactly the same way yeah I think when we're living in God's mercy we're able to have a better look at our sin we don't have to be afraid to see our sin and so we're more open to saying oh I am sinful in this way and that works mercy in us Roger it helps you begin to see things as they really are and the way they really are is that everything is God's mercy I mean the fact that you were able to get up in the morning the fact that you can have that job is God's mercy everything is a mercy and so to know that then you seek after well where's the mercy here and you find it and the Lord shows it to you I mean I could have a bad day at work and everything could go wrong and

[32:49] I can always say yes but oh it could have been so far worse without the Lord he's the one gave the attitude regardless of all that's coming down just I mean everything's a mercy yeah so it's much easier to go to work when you're thankful instead of when you're coming to work with a sense of entitlement and then you're surprised aren't you you're surprised that they're treating you badly or you're surprised that something's going wrong so it makes it worse yes to build my faith to realize that there is a purpose that God has for my work and my job beyond what I can see as the end product what I'm making or what I'm selling or whatever it's part of the brand design purpose that

I really have no idea why he has me there or working around the people I know that it builds my faith to know that I can trust him to include me and include all his children in the world!

good so just to wrap that point up in view of God's mercy that's where this total body whole person sacrifice and offering and zeal and passion comes from God finally third very briefly practically practically where does a viable working sense of God's mercy come from so we talked about it's necessary if we're going to have true passion where does a working viable sense of God's mercy come from what I mean is how do we get a strong sense of that mercy that really does have daily power daily power to make me work enthusiastically well practically we get it through the means of grace the means of grace and the means of grace one of the most important means of grace is the Sabbath the Lord's day the Sabbath is meant to be a day of rest a day of not working the Sabbath is a day for finding rest for finding fullness finding that finding out that we don't have to work we don't have to work all the time we don't have to have an incessant like that doctor that was pregnant just incessant effort we don't have to do that because God is good and he provides for us so remember the Israelites on the day before the Sabbath twice as much manna came down and they were able to collect twice as much so on that Sabbath day they didn't have to collect manna because God provided Deuteronomy 5 it gives the Ten Commandments again and it says remember that you were slaves in

Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with the almighty hand an outstretched hand therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day the Sabbath day was meant to be a day of rest but it was also meant to be a day of remembrance for the Lord's mercies to remember their salvation it was a day to remind them that God provides it's not all up to them and to their work but it's also a day to remember that God saves so what was the heart behind the Sabbath it was meant to remind the people of God's mercy!

[37:08] His mercy and providence His mercy and salvation God's love and provision for them they weren't supposed to or they were supposed to sense and come to know more and more that God was on their side that He was with them that He's their Savior and their friend they're not slaves to their labor anymore like they were slaves in Egypt they're now free from it they aren't enslaved to their work they aren't enslaved to provide for!

they aren't enslaved to work in order to get their masters off their backs the Sabbath was a declaration of freedom from all of that it's a declaration that says I'm free I can rest now the Sabbath

Colossians 2 says is fulfilled in Christ therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or with regard to a religious festival a new moon celebration or a Sabbath day these are shadows of the things that were to come the reality however is found in Christ now that is not saying that we don't practice a Sabbath that is to say that the Sabbath has been infused with a very new meaning or it's been seen for this new meaning that it's always had and that is that Christ is the reality of the Sabbath in him our work is done as far as blessed so what is today about?

What is the Lord's day meant to be about? It's about the Lord. Have we forgotten that?

Have we lost that? Are we poor because of all the things that we're doing we're forgetting that the Lord's day is the Lord's day and it's meant for our good.

And so out of that fullness that we are meant to receive on the Lord's day we're to go to work. This is the first day of the week.

[39:19] It's the day that we get our strength built up. It's the day that we get filled up. And so now I don't go to work with a false passion that I've got to do it for myself.

I go to work with a sense of the fullness that I have in Jesus Christ. And so I work for him and I'll give him everything I have because he gave me everything he had.

One last thing and then we're done. In the film Chariots of Fire you see the story played out of two men racing in the Olympics Harold Abrahams and Eric Little true story it's a wonderful movie Abrahams ran literally this is what he said in order to justify my existence I run to justify my existence Little's running wasn't his savior he said I run because God made me fast and when I run I feel his pleasure and there you have it that's a good summary little had gifts from God you have gifts from God and when he used them with all of his heart when he used them for God instead of trying to justify himself and his existence something happened

I feel his pleasure so in this series we've seen the whole scope of work we've seen work as it was meant to be or how it was in the beginning we've seen work under sin and now at the end we've seen work redeemed and this is where we'll end through the gospel God gives us back our work and he says to us rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice so when you work you are meant to feel his pleasure as you do it to the Lord I hope you do we're dismissed