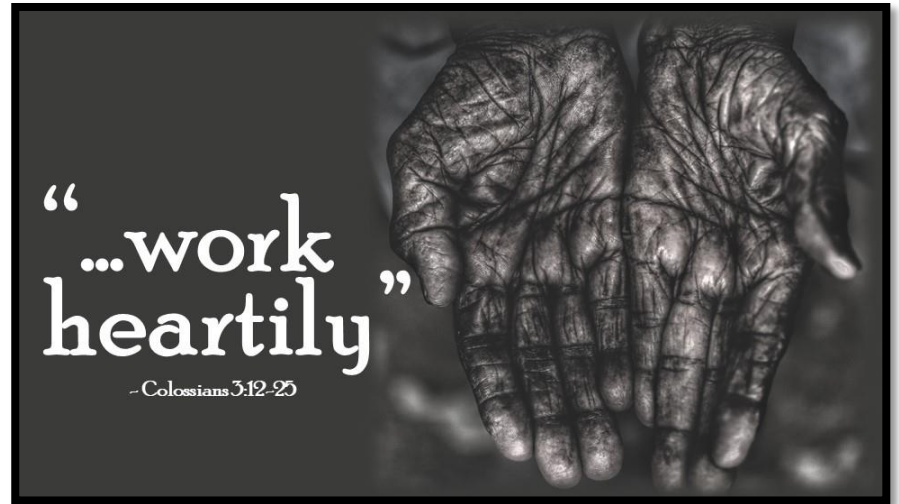


# “...work heartily.”

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
at JF Believers Church  
in Menomonie, Wis  
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- Colossians 3:12-25



## 3:12

Our passage today continues and completes Paul's call to the Christian to actually live a holy life. He continues where we left off last time we were together on this text wherein he appeals to the true believer to "Put off" ... to "put on" (Col. 3:8-10). He exhorted the Christians there in Colossi...*as well as those in Menomonie, Wisconsin*, to put off the graveclothes of sin and the old life, and to put on the "grace-clothes" of holiness and the new life in Christ.

Let's review: Paul has been using the terminology of "put on" and "put off," like a picture of putting on new clothes. By doing so he brings the believer firmly into the arena of play. No sitting back and living life in a spiritual fatalism wherein we take no active or often even *tacit* participation, but look to our Redeemer to initiate, facilitate, unilaterally carry, administer, and provide for our one way "hand out" association. He directly calls upon us to step up and *put on* the attributes of Christ and Spirit-filled living. To "put off" the man or woman we used to be, and "put on" Christ.

I have had a lot of conversations with people over the years that on the one hand verbalized a desire to grow and be a godly man or woman and sought direction, and then proceeded to reject every effort that was made on their behalf. Because of their hard and stubborn hearts...and often lazy countenance, their unwillingness to be challenged and to change, they walked out in the same condition that they walked in. Paul was attempting to "intervene" in the same manner as we have attempted countless times over the years, sometime with success and sometimes not.

Paul begins the section of scripture with that same call to the professing believer...the guide one might give such a searching soul as I mentioned. To "put on." This time it is to *put on* the attributes and practices of holy living...the attributes of Christ Himself. This Greek aorist imperative implies a sense of urgency, and provides this short "list" to characterize the true Christian's life. Some of these attributes include "tender mercies ...kindness ...humility ...meekness ... longsuffering.

We are to have a *mercy* one for another that runs deep into our being. Not something that is turned off and on like a light switch, but a constant attitude and characteristic.

"*Kindness*" speaks of the unselfish spirit of doing for others. It is an attitude of affection or goodwill. Even if there is an uncomfortable or even painful exchange.

"*humility*" is an attribute that is crucial in a successful Christian walk, for "Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"...Prov 16:18

**“meekness”** is not “weakness”. This word has been translated “power under control.” It is a place of self-control in the knowledge that God is IN control! Note: Jesus (1Pet 2:23)

**“longsuffering”** simply means the “trait of suffering long” or “a long time”. This is not an attribute that is widely embraced within the body of Christ today, especially in America. We will rarely sign up for inconvenient and uncomfortable. Thus “suffering” is a long way off our radar!

### 3:13

Paul continues; **“forbearing”** - That means not just “putting up with” someone else, but moreover, to (gr) “hold them up.” That requires all these other attributes Paul mentions! It calls for personal involvement and sacrifice.

**“forgiving.”** Paul leaves us with no ambiguity as to what this really means. He gives us what is perhaps the quintessential definition and direction on forgiveness. “...as Christ forgave you, so you also [**must do**].” How did Christ forgive us? Completely, and forever; even again and again! Does Christ forgive us without our seeking His forgiveness? No. This too is our instruction. And we have in us, through the power of Christ living through us, the power to act in this manner...to forgive in this way. For while we are “elect, holy, and loved” (verse 12), we also must never forget that we are also nothing more than forgiven sinners...

*“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.”*  
(2 Peter 1:3)

### 3:14

“Above all”...or, **“more than anything,”** **put on** love. In John 13:35 Jesus states emphatically that “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” Paul stated much the same as all of this in his letter to the church in Galatia... *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”* (Gal 5:22-23) Note that these things are the **fruit** of the Spirit, not the **fruits** of the Spirit. Therefore those indwelt and controlled by the Spirit of God **will** manifest **all** of these attributes.

Paul says that the manifest of such love is the “bond of perfection” or “completeness.” A clearer way to say it is love “binds us all together in perfect harmony.” Love is the “outer garment” that holds all the rest of these things in place. *“Love is the power which unites and holds together all those graces and virtues which together make up perfection.”* (J.B. Lightfoot)

### 3:15

*“...let the peace of God rule”* means “direct, control, ...be the umpire.”

Let’s acknowledge a bit of dirty laundry: many believers today really know nothing of the “peace of God.” Not because it is not available or is just available for a select few. But rather they have actually chosen **not** to allow this peace to “umpire and direct” their lives, so naturally the result is confusion, loss of life direction, and an unsettled path!

We are not instructed to “seek peace” at the crossroads of decision, but rather to let the peace “reign.” In order for that to occur, the peace must already be there to guide and direct *prior to reaching that crossroad of testing*. Therefore “peace” is something to acquire and nurture every day of our walk through this life with Christ.

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6-7)*

This “peace” needs to be in play within both the individual as well as the whole of the body of Christ. The church must make decisions based on these same criteria. Notice that it is not peace *alone*. But rather it is the peace *of God*! If our desire is first and last to please God, we are on safe ground. If we just want the peace...yes, even the “peace” that this world pretends to offer, without the God who issues the one only true manifest, then we are on our own!

### **3:16**

Another way to have peace (vs 15) and to make correct and godly decisions is to “let the word of God dwell in you.” “Dwell” is a carefully placed and uniquely sculptured word which means to “live, reside, and remain” in you.

Again, many go and seek direction in His Word when decisions or direction must be made. This is not bad, but we should rather let the Word actually dwell in us, which requires a constant connection to it. We need to “hide His Word in our hearts.” (Ps 119:11)

“teaching” means “instruction”...“admonishing” means “warn, correct.” (2 Tim 3:16-17 & 4:1-2)

Let’s be honest. The greater church today has overwhelmingly left the careful and total adherence to the Word of God. Amos 8:11- 13 tells the story: *“The time is surely coming,” says the Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread or water but of hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from border to border searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it. Beautiful girls and strong young men will grow faint in that day, thirsting for the LORD’s word...”*

It is not enough to just be taught the Word or to even hear it. We must *possess it* as a present, personal experience. Without it we are without direction. That is why Satan battles us concerning our being in the Word. For it is the basis for our spiritual victory and we can be so easily defeated when we are out of it.

John 15:7 – *“But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!”*

### **3:17**

This verse is the supreme council concerning our finding and doing the will of God. Can you, *in the exercise of the action in which you question*, do it *all* in the name of Jesus Christ? This speaks not only of His divine will but moreover of the giving of all the glory to Him. We must cross that bridge wherein Christ is our everything.

So...let’s ask that ultimate question: Does your life and decisions give glory to God? Would he rejoice and support your decisions?

**Verses 12-17**...these are the clothes of the “new man.” These are some of the *attributes*...the “fruit” of God’s present Spirit in a life.

### **3:18**

Psalms 101:2 says, *“I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”* “Perfect” means “complete and whole.”

Many of us can seem to live a victorious Christian life in public, but what about in the home? What are we like in private, behind closed doors? What are we like with our wife, our husband, and our children? Please understand that this passage is not a moral guide for marriages. Rather it is practical and God-given instruction, yes, even **commands**, for the born-again individual and the born-again couple. For the home that does not know Jesus intimately does not have the ability or the power to live out the qualities we find in the next few verses.

The public religious community is fond of asking the question: *what was the first institution God founded?* Their answer, *inevitably*, is “family”, but they would be incorrect. God’s first institution was a relationship (and one of obedience) between man and Himself and for man to care for what He had given him. The latter being one of service. The proof of this is found in Genesis 1:26, 2:7, and 2:15. These verses, as well as the events and calling, occurred even prior to Eve’s creation. This is our **FIRST** priority.

How does this play into the commitment and sanctity of the Christian family? It plays in the fact that unless these **first** “institutions” are met and nurtured, all others that follow will most often be dysfunctional and a constant struggle. This includes, *of course*, the gift and responsibility of marriage and family.

Note the word here in verse 18 is “wives,” not “women” in relation to women submitting to men in general, despite what the world will try to have you believe Christianity is saying. Moreover, 1 Peter 4 and Ephesians 5 tell us to “submit one unto the other” for harmony and order within the body of Christ. This covers the mutual submission requested for outside of marriage. Our passage herein says it is a wife who is to submit to her **husband**, not just any male.

The word “submit” is a military term meaning “to rank under.” This does not ...**hear me**...it *does not* imply worth or value or to say that the wife is inferior to her husband. But rather it is an arrangement for order and unity within the marriage. (Note 1 Corinthians 14:40 and 1 Corinthians 11:3)

The problems women often have in this instruction is in the understanding...or often the mere acceptance, of what is actually said. Moreover, we often don’t take into consideration the whole of this passage, nor the whole of this subject as it is handled in the totality of scripture. To grasp the entirety of this verse we must know what the entirety of scripture says concerning a wife’s submission, as well as coming to grips with the idea of humility, servanthood, and order within the body of Christ. (See Eph 5:22-33, 1Pet 3:1-7, and Genesis 2)

Jesus Himself was the supreme example. Philippians 2:7-8 says “...*he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.*”

While this direction is not limited to marriages where both individuals are believers, it does stand to reason that the only way that this works well and as designed is in combination with the next verse directed to the husbands...

### **3:19**

Ephesians 5:25 tells us “**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.**” That verse gives clarity to the level of love that is requested here in Colossians 3. This is the love which we are instructed to give, and are actually empowered to manifest through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

So, how did Christ love the church? He loved it unilaterally, unconditionally, supernaturally, completely, and forever. With this kind of love and this level of love, it is easy for submission to take place from our wives, as well as respect and honor!

The use of the word “love” in verse 19 also incorporates a meaning of “well pleased and contented” and “bitter” (gr) means “angry and irritated.”

### **3:20**

This is a simple to understand direction and to the point. Please note that it does not mean forever; for in marriage we are instructed to “leave and cleave” to our spouse. And our obedience also must be to God first, which affects unbiblical directions and ungodly relationships, whether they are our parents or not. I have seen a lot of dysfunctional family relationships...these days more than ever it seems, that can really hamstring a person from becoming what God is clearly calling them to be and do because a parent is unwilling to let go and is needy and unsettled themselves. If parents are to their children, as God our Father is to us, we would be on safe ground. Note following verse...

### **3:21**

The words in the old King James... “to anger” or “lest they become discouraged” ...do not appear in the original but were added for what was thought to be “clarity.” However, in truth it actually clouds the meaning, especially in today’s world. The point was and is to not “provoke your children” in a negative direction...one that is contrary to what God would want for them...one that will lead to greater maturity and kingdom usefulness.

“discouraged” (gr) means “disheartened, dispirited, broken in spirit.” Bottom line here is that parents who are providing a spiritual environment of scripture, service, and spiritual priorities will have a much easier time with child rearing than those who do not. More than anything, they must see your *passion*...assuming you have any, for the things of the kingdom. Teaching them the ABC’s of scripture and taking them to church is not going to do it. They have to see a real overwhelming and all-encompassing zeal and fervor in you as follower of Christ or why would they pursue it themselves? It has been this one error that has cost a lot of loss of children to the enemy and left parents wondering what happened, as they thought they had done everything correctly. Moreover, parents who are not visibly ...yes even publicly obedient to God themselves, should not wonder why they have obedience problems in their children!

### **3:22**

“bond servants” – speaks of one who is in bondage or service, usually for financial debt or payment. We can easily apply this to today’s employee/worker.

Let’s face it, one can quickly see that submission is required on some level for all of us in order to function in society. Again, this is an issue of order and unity. The guy who can never submit is going to find his journey through this life difficult, often painful, and no doubt very lonely.

One does not have to “join together” in spirit or ideals, when it comes to our workplace, but rather we simply are united in bodily service...according to the flesh, in that which you are hired to perform. This does however preclude illegalities, dishonesty, and ungodly practices.

“not with eyeservice, as men pleasers”- this calls us to an honest relationship with our employers. Not to merely pretend to work as instructed and expected, but in *reality*, to actually give an honest day’s work. In *all things*

we are called to give glory to God. Do our work habits glorify God? Do we exemplify our relationship with and in Christ through our work? (Note following verse...)

### **3:23**

Whatever is done in this life...whatever is deemed worthy of our participation, should be done heartily (literally “from the soul”) as to the Lord and not to men...in every form of Christian service as well as in every sphere of life.

In this sense, there is no difference between secular and sacred endeavors. All is sacred. Rewards in heaven will not be for prominence or apparent successes...they will not be for talents or opportunities. They will be for *faithfulness*. Thus obscure people...those who perhaps never saw the public prominence, will fare very well in that day if they have carried out their duties faithfully as to the Lord.

When it comes specifically to our workplace attitudes and habits, they should not only *reflect* Jesus Christ, but we are to work as if we are actually working for the Lord! As if He is our boss, our employer! We should in reality be the best employees...the hardest workers, the most conscientious, above reproach.

But life is more than just secular work. Those who claim to be a child of God should be reflecting a lifestyle wherein whatever we do, we do it up large. That we live with passion and work harder, play harder, and serve Jesus greater, and just live out of our lives with greater veracity than anyone who chooses to try to make this run without Christ.

### **3:24**

We must realize that no part of our lives are separate from our faith. We are Christians. Everything else comes second. We are a total package in Christ. We cannot “punch out” of the faith, we cannot separate who we are from what we do. In the family, the marriage, the workplace, in work or in pleasure. Over the years, countless individuals have passed through our midst and quickly or ultimately departed. There were of course many different reasons, but I am convinced that far and away the greatest reason ...the ultimate foundational issue simply came down to this one fact: We in this church are “all in.” We are “no fear” believers. We are the navy seals...the marines. And for a lot of folks, they simply want something easier. I have literally had people in my office on their way out the door tell me that point blank. What can I do but show them the door? Because we aren’t ever going to be anything but the front line. We intend to work hard, serve diligently, love enduringly, and live out our calling. Just as Jesus did for us, we intend to reciprocate. If you are looking for a Jesus-lite church, this is not it.

### **3:25**

This is a biblical way of saying we “get what we deserve” and it “doesn’t matter who we are.” The scriptures tell us we “reap what we sow.” So... just what are you planting today? Worldliness? Compromise? Strife and self-centered pursuits? Or godly living and spiritual pursuits in everything?