

## Going Deeper with the Sermon Kevin Work part 1—Col 3:17-4:1

I came to Christ in my second last year of school. By the last year of school I could no longer see the sense of secular education let alone the prospect of something as mundane as going to work.

Part of my journey in coming to Christ was looking at my Dad who had just retired and thinking about the futility of life ... born, school, work, retire, die ... is that all there is?

God had called me to minister and that had become my total focus. And so for example a history essay on the causes of WW 2 became an opportunity to talk about the sinfulness of man much to the frustration of my Christian history teacher.

v17 ... 23 ... stopped me in my tracks.

In hindsight my thinking was a bit crazy but as I reflect on it I think I came by it honestly. I was simply taking the prevailing Christian thinking of the day to its logical conclusion. You see the church I was born again into, and I suspect many of you were as well, was influenced by a long line of what I want to call 'split-person philosophy'.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Cent' world into which the church was born was being shaped by numerous philosophies. One of them was a dualism which separated that which was done in the body from the spiritual. Life according to this philosophy consisted of the lower elements (the body) and the higher (the spirit). Colossians was written into this world and is in fact a challenge to these ideas.

However as you trace the history of the church you see this 'split-person philosophy' growing in influence.

4<sup>th</sup> Cent' ... Augustine popularized the idea that Jesus' earthly purpose was to "release souls of light from the prison of their bodies". He established a tendency for the church to promote a dualistic theology that divided life into the sacred and the secular.

The implications of this dualism were profound. Praying, reading the Bible and going to church came to be considered sacred activities while working, eating and other aspects of life were seen as secular. Likewise there developed false distinctions in vocations. Jobs like pastor, priest, missionary, monk, nun were considered spiritual vocations and given much more value than the secular vocations of builder, farmer, teacher, lawyer, housewife, scientist, artist or businessperson.

Surely its time we regained a Biblical understanding of work. Surely its time we challenged our 'split-person philosophy' and instead of dividing life up into series of separate boxes we see it as a whole, as a set of intersecting circles.

This is what Paul is doing in Col. Remember the backdrop to this letter is Paul challenging the influence of dualistic thinking coming into the church. So what does he say about work ...

v17 ... in the name ... as followers; as one representing the person

Everything we do should be done conscious of his calling, his commands, his promises and sustenance.

v22 ... reverence ... fear of the Lord ... God consciousness

v23-24 ... I work for God regardless of what I do. It is Him I look to for my reward. It is Him I serve.

1 Cor 10:31 ... So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

If you work in a quarry, what are you doing? ... hewing stone ... earning a living ... building a cathedral. Such thinking is built on two foundations.

Our identity is in Christ and not what we do. 1:21-22; 2:9-12

Although we may be described as accountants, housewives, engineers, builders, missionaries or pastors. Our primary vocation is not to a place or a job but a person.

God created work and it is good

Many see work is part of the fall. It is a curse and not a good gift from God.

Gen 1 we see God is a worker and when he saw all that he had made he pronounced that it was good. God enjoyed perfect job-satisfaction.

God creates man in his own image and as such makes them workers too.

Gen 2 ... Now the Lord God planted a garden ... The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

God gives them the privilege of co-operating with Him by creatively caring for and developing the creation as stewards. Work is good in and of itself. It is a source of satisfaction.

Col ... 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.

### Questions for reflection

1. Think about your work, what brings you satisfaction and dissatisfaction?
2. Have you ever thought through God's purposes of positioning you in your workplace?
3. How does knowing your identity in Christ reshape your thinking about work?
4. Is there something that you sense God is talking to you about in terms of work?