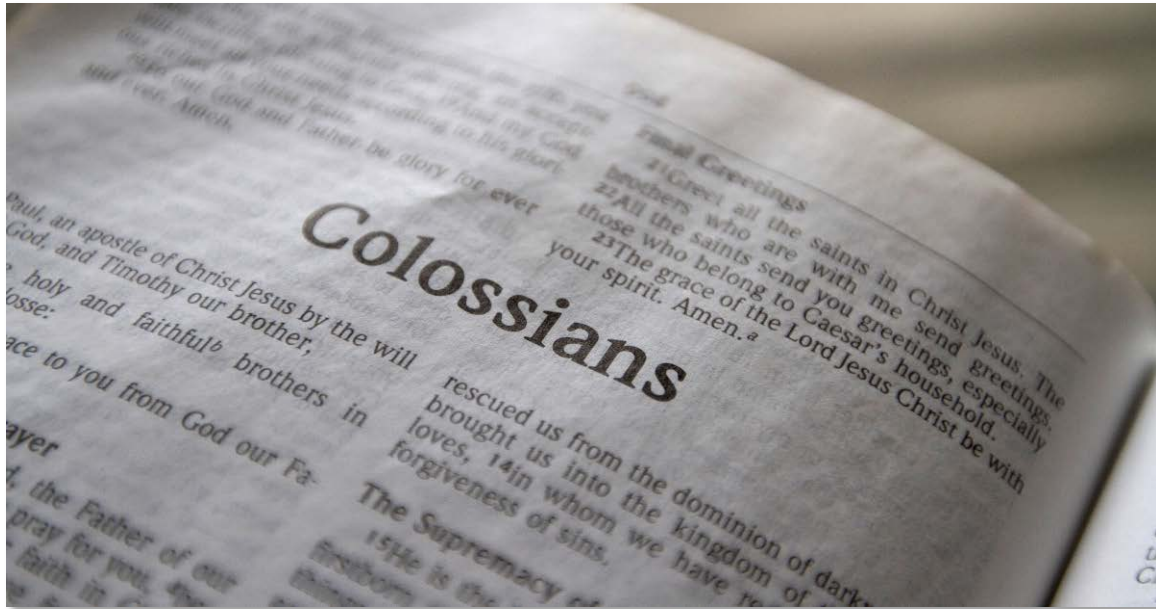


GROWING IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

Growing in Christ: Colossians 3
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Colossians 3: Introduction

To grow in Christ, we must set our minds on Him. Then we will put off anything that is contrary to Christ and be more fully clothed in Him. Thus, we increase in love, which is the glue which binds us together in the Body of Christ.

Paul has been focusing on love as the mark of faithful saints throughout the book of Colossians. Here he brings it together with Jesus, so that growing in Jesus means growing in love.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Things Above

Opening Prayer: Psalm 2. 11, 12

Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Sing Psalm 2.11, 12

(Agincourt: *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)
Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

Read Colossians 3.1-4

Preparation

1. Where does Paul want us to set our minds?
2. Why should we do this?

Meditation

Having warned us against “principles of the world” and being distracted by them from Jesus our Head (chapter 2), Paul turns in chapter 3 to exhort his readers in practical disciplines designed to keep the saints of God growing in faithfulness.

Except that, for many of us, this first discipline won't seem too practical. Paul instructs us concerning what to seek and how to seek them. We are to “seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (v. 1). But what are “those things”? Paul has already alluded to them: Jesus ruling in glory, upholding the cosmos, advancing His Kingdom, gathering His elect, building His Church, filling the world with Himself and His love through faithful saints like the Colossians. Such things are to be our focus; we are to “seek” these things, setting our minds on them (v. 2) so that they become the map, path, and destination of our walk with the Lord.

We will grow in Christ, and thus be strong to resist the shadows and appearances of faith, if we set our minds on Him and His Kingdom, looking to Him to guide us in all our ways. After all, Paul says, our lives have been “hidden with Christ in God” (v. 3; cf. Eph. 2.6). We're awaiting the day when Jesus will be revealed in all His glory, and we will see Him as He is and be like Him (1 Jn. 3.1-3).

A barrage of cheap substitutes assaults our mind continually – worldly gewgaws, petty attractions, cheap thrills. If we set our mind on Christ – through prayer, meditation, Scripture memorization, singing, and spiritual conversation – we'll be able to fend off these fleeting distractions and carry out all our proper duties and tasks within a Kingdom perspective and framework.

Strap on the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16), and everything you do will help you to grow closer to Him.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

If then, this is true, it changes everything.

First, we are already dead... “For you died” (v. .3). Condolences.
If then, we are already dead, our life consists only in Christ.
“...your life is hidden with Christ in God” (v. 3). Congratulations.

If then, this is true, it changes everything.
Second, we are to seek Christ... “seek those things which are above, where Christ is...” (v. 1; Ps. 119.112). Constraint.
If then, we are only to seek Christ, we set aside all our earthly focus... “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (v. 2; Gal. 5.22, 23). Control.

If then, this is true, it changes everything.
Third, Christ is our life. There is no other... “When Christ who is our life appears...” (v. 4). “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14.6).
Concept.
If then, our life consists only of Him, and our eternal life begins when He appears... “you also will appear with Him in glory” (v. 4). Continue.

If then, this is true, it should change everything.
“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption,
and this mortal has put on immortality,
then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:
‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” (I Cor. 15.54). Concluded.

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21.1, 4). Things above to be continued! Eternally.

Reflection

1. What does it mean to set your mind on the things that are above?
2. In what sense is your life hidden with Christ in God? How should knowing this help you in fending off worldly distractions and temptations?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to “seek those things which are above”?

See how Paul has transferred them into heaven itself. For, as I said, he is always bent on showing that they have the very same things that Christ has. Through all his epistles the tenor is this, to show that in all things they are partakers with him. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Colossians 7

Enrich me today, O Lord, so that knowing and loving You I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 2.1-10

Praise Jesus Christ, as you see Him, exalted in glory, upholding the cosmos by His Word of power, and putting all His enemies under His feet! Rejoice that your life is hidden in Him with God!

Psalm 2.1-10

(Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!)

Why do the nations vainly rage, conspiring together from age to age?
Earth’s kings and all of their counselors stand against the Lord and His Right Hand:

“Now let us cast His yoke below, His Kingdom authority overthrow!
Throw off His Law, reject His Word; no more be governed by this Lord!”

The Lord in heaven laughs in wrath at all who embark on this cursèd path.
His angry Word to them is plain: “Yet shall My King in Zion reign!”

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won!

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

2 Put Off, Put On

Opening Prayer: Psalm 1.1, 2

Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

Sing Psalm 1.1, 2

(St. Thomas: [*I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*](#))

How blessed are they that shun sin's vain and wicked ways.
For them has Christ salvation won; He loves them all their days.

God's Word is their delight; they prosper in its truth.
In it they dwell both day and night to flourish and bear fruit.

Read Colossians 3.5-11

Preparation

1. What are Christians supposed to “put off”? Why?
2. What should we “put on” instead?

Meditation

If we have indeed been raised to life in Jesus, and our lives are hidden with Him in God, then everything about us should change.

But that doesn't just happen. We must exert ourselves *against* our old, sinful ways and *for* the new life we have in Christ. Paul's catalogue of sinful practices (vv. 5, 8, 9) is not meant to be exhaustive. However, you can see how it touches on many of the Ten Commandments, by which we know what sin is (Rom. 7.7). God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who deny Him, walk in the counsel of ungodliness, take their stand with sinners, and are comfortably seated in a sinful lifestyle (Ps. 1.1, 2; Rom. 1.18-32).

We don't want to be there.

So we workout our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2.12), learning Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24), and putting Him on in every facet and aspect of our lives (Rom. 13.14). We'll need to set our minds on the things that are above, and on Jesus supremely (Col. 3.1-4). As we do, we will see more of His greatness, beauty, holiness, power, and love, and we will be drawn to be like Him, renewed in His image and becoming more like Christ (vv. 10, 11).

You will be faced with this choice every day: Back to the life of sin, or forward into the image of Jesus? Choose wisely.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Here is a quick checklist to help us in our choices of what to **Put off** and **Put on**:

1. **Put off** anything that becomes more important than God. (no other gods)
2. **Put off** anything that we might worship other than God. (no idolatry)
3. **Put off** saying you are a Christian but not acting like it. (no vain talking)
4. **Put on** the day of rest, remembering to keep it holy. (yes to the Sabbath)
5. **Put on** honoring of our mothers and fathers. (yes to honoring parents)
6. **Put off** hatred of others that brings us to murder either with actions or words. (no killing)
7. **Put off** unfaithfulness to our spouse. (no adultery)
8. **Put off** the taking of other people's belongings. (no stealing)
9. **Put off** untruths. (no lying)
10. **Put off** intense desires for other people's people, place and/or things. (no coveting)

This pretty much sums up everything God wants us to do and not to do.
And it encompasses all the behaviors that we would like for others to treat us with.
Nothing too outlandish here. It is love lived out in actions and thoughts.
It is what God gave us by His own hand in Exodus 20.1-17; and Jesus reiterated them all in Matthew 22.37-40.

And our attitude of obedience should be the same as the psalmist when he said: "I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments" (Ps.119.60).

Let us with the psalmist go forward, carefully putting off sin and putting on Jesus, choosing wisely because as He said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14.15).

Reflection

1. Why is the Law of God important for our lives as faithful saints?
2. What does it mean to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ?
3. How can Christians help one another in "putting off" and "putting on"?

... when the lusts of the flesh are brought into subjection the heart may have no concern for riches or ambition or pleasures. The intention is that God may be all to us, if we live after his image and likeness, as far as we can attain to it, through all. Ambrose of Milan (333-397), *Of the Christian Faith* 5.14.175-76

Clothe me with Your righteousness today, Jesus, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 1.3-6

As you pray, allow the Lord to search you and to reveal any areas where your old sinful self is still active. Confess, repent, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 1.3-6

(St. Thomas: [*I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*](#))

Firm planted on the banks of God's great stream of grace,
they raise unending praise and thanks to His great glorious face.

The wicked are not so, but, driven by the winds,
they fall and perish, weighed with woe, when once God's wrath begins.

In Jesus' righteousness, though sinners fail and fall,
His flock He will preserve and bless, who on His favor call.

3 Put on Love

Opening Prayer: Psalm 5.7, 8

But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy;
In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.
Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.

Sing Psalm 5.7, 8

(Angel's Story: [*O Jesus, I Have Promised*](#))

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

Read Colossians 3.12-15

Preparation

1. What above all must we “put on”?
2. If we put on the things Paul commands, where will that leave us?

Meditation

Let's remember that Paul regarded the believers in Colossae as faithful saints who excelled in loving one another (1.2, 4). Even so, here he encouraged them to put on even more of those qualities which characterize the Lord Jesus in glory, each of which is an expression of love (vv. 12-14). This is how those who have been chosen by God and are loved by Him seek to live (v. 12). We can use the virtues mentioned here to assess the state of our own love and seek the Lord to help us grow where we find ourselves falling short.

Love is the “bond of perfection” (v. 14). It bonds us to the Lord, bonds us to one another, and bonds us to those who need to know the Lord. To grow in love, we must set our minds on Jesus, exalted in glory (vv. 1-3); clear our souls of every wicked and selfish indulgence (vv. 5-11); and take up those specific practices (vv. 12, 13) which help us grow in love.

God wants His peace to rule in our hearts (v. 15). We can “let” this be the case by walking the path God has marked out for us, the path of love. Paul also calls us to “be thankful” (v. 15). Usually, he commands us to “give thanks” and we should do so “in everything” (Phil. 4.6, 7; 1 Thess. 5.18). But we should strive for more than merely *giving* thanks. We should seek to *be* thankful people, people who give thanks because we *are* thankful. When the love of Christ is increasing in us, and the peace of God enfolds and sustains us, being thankful will be just who we are.

Let's aim for that.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Wouldn't it be nice if putting on love was as easy as putting on a shirt?
Or dousing ourselves with after shave or perfume?
Or donning a hat?
That would be nice, but it isn't actually possible.

Putting on love is an act of obedience.
Determined, with true striving, and effort.

Before we can attempt this, God gives us some words of encouragement.
They consist of this:

1. We are His elect people. (vs.12)
2. We are holy. (vs. 12)
3. We are beloved. (vs. 12)

This is amazing information.

Now here is the checklist of what putting on love consists of:

1. Put on tender mercies. (vs. 12)
2. Put on kindness. (vs. 12)
3. Put on humility. (vs. 12)
4. Put on meekness. (vs. 12)
5. Put on longsuffering. (vs.12)
6. We must bear with one another. (vs.13)
7. We must forgive one another. (vs. 13)

And the reason we must forgive one another is because Christ forgave us.
He also said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14.15).
And, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15.14).

Truly, if we love Jesus, first and foremost, we will be inclined to put on love for others.
We will be filled with His Holy Spirit who will enable us to accomplish this noble and necessary task.
With His power we will put love on! Without it we will be stuck with shirts, after shave, and hats.

Reflection

1. Putting on God’s love leads to enjoying God’s peace. Explain.
2. Why do we have to work at putting on love? Why doesn’t it just come “naturally” to us?
3. We don’t work at putting on love to *be* saved but because we *are* saved. Explain.

Now what Paul wishes to say is that there is no benefit in those things, for all those things fall apart, unless they are done with love. This is the love that binds them all together. Whatever good thing it is that you mention, if love be absent, it is nothing, it melts away. John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on Colossians 8*

Let Your love abound in me today, O Lord, as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 5.1-6, 11, 12

Seek the Lord, that He might fill you with love for the day ahead and give you joy in serving Him.

Sing Psalm 5.1-6, 11, 12

(Angel’s Story: [*O Jesus, I Have Promised*](#))

O Lord, attend and hear me, consider how I groan.

Receive my cries and near be, and love me as Your own.

By morning, Lord I seek You, for You will hear my voice;

My every need You speak to, and make my soul rejoice!

In sin You take no pleasure; no evil dwells with You.
Vain boasts You will not treasure, nor those who boasting do.
Sin kindles Your hot anger, You crush all those who lie;
the violent live in danger of Your all-searching eye.

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter 'neath Your wing.
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield;
preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

4 Living from Above

Opening Prayer: Psalm 31.23, 24

Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!
For the LORD preserves the faithful,
And fully repays the proud person.
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart,
All you who hope in the LORD.

Sing Psalm 31.23, 24

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))

O love the Lord, all you, His saints! He keeps us faithfully.
But all who act in sinful pride His wrath shall surely see.
Be strong and let your heart not fret; wait on Him constantly!

Read Colossians 3.16, 17

Preparation

1. What did Paul instruct us to do with the Word of Christ?
2. To what would that lead in our lives?

Meditation

Foundational to growing in and walking with the Lord is time in His Word – seeking and meeting Him there, so that you may be made more like Him (Jn. 5.39; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). Paul instructs us to *internalize* the Word, to let it sink into our soul – heart, mind, and conscience – and to do so *richly*. When the Word of Christ dwells in us richly, it engenders wisdom – like Christ, the Wisdom of God (Prov. 8, Col. 2.3).

As we increase in wisdom, the fruit of the Word will be more evident in our lives, and we will teach and admonish one another, praise the Lord with singing, and increase in His grace in our hearts (v. 16). That being established as the essence of our existence, whatever we do – whether in word or deed – will honor and exalt and proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ with thanksgiving (v. 17).

Faithful saints, like those in Colossae, will take Paul's words to heart and give themselves to the kind of reading, meditating, study, and waiting on the Lord that help us to set our minds on Christ and the things that are above. When we are thus anchored above in our soul, we will live from above in our daily lives.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

When something dwells richly that precludes it from dwelling poorly.

The Word of Christ, and Christ Himself through His Holy Spirit, will richly dwell in us when we read, study and meditate on the Scriptures. How else will we know what Christ is like if we don't read about Him there? How will we know what pleases Him and displeases Him? How will we have guidance to live our lives if we are just guessing how to do it? How will we grow from poorly to richly without the Bread of Life? Richly denotes abundance and perfection. Poorly renders thoughts of the scraggly and inept. When we live in the power from above, we blossom into fullness.

“And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1.16).

“...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3.16-19).

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col.2.9,10).

Let us feast on the Word and become full of Him! Richly.

Reflection

1. What does it take to have the Word of God dwell in us richly?
2. How can believers encourage and support one another in this effort?
3. What’s one thing you can do to begin realizing more of the fullness of God in your life?

Many have the word, but it dwells in them poorly; it has no power over them. The soul prospers, when we are full of the Scriptures and of the grace of Christ.. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Colossians 3.16*

Fill me with Your Word today, O Lord, and let it overflow from me as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 31.14-22

Rejoice in the Lord’s salvation. Pray that you may know more of His salvation today, and that He will give you an opportunity to share with and encourage a fellow believer.

Psalm 31.14-22

(Brother James’ Air: [*The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll not Want*](#))

But I will trust in You, O Lord; You are my God and King!
My times are in Your hand; from those who hate me rescue me!
Shine down Your face on me with grace; let Your love on me be!

Let me not come to shame, O Lord, for on Your Name I call.
Let wicked men to hell be cast, let shame upon them fall.
Their lies and plots shall come to naught; to silence send them all!

How great the goodness You reserve for those who fear You, Lord,
who rest in You and boldly stand before men in Your Word.
You cover them from plots of men; You shelter them, O Lord!

Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown His steadfast love to me!
In my alarm I cried to Him; He heard my fervent plea!
In fear and dread with You I pled; You heard and rescued me!

5 Homefront Discipleship

Opening Prayer: Psalm 71.14-16

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Sing Psalm 71.14-16, 3

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read Colossians 3.18-21

Preparation

1. To what should relationships in the home be oriented?
2. What should characterize a Christian home?

Meditation

Home is where we hone our skills of discipleship and disciple-making. Home offers continuous opportunities to practice the love of Jesus. The more consistent we are in loving our spouses, children, and parents, the more that love will transfer into the rest of our Personal Mission Field.

The operative phrase in these verses is “in the Lord” or “to the Lord” (vv. 18, 20). If we set our minds on the Lord and the out-of-and-above-this-world love He shows us, we’ll love and submit to one another in the home, as each situation requires. A wife who is loved as Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5.22-25) will gladly submit to such love and flourish in it (v. 18). The husband’s duty is to nurture such love for his wife and to guard against any bitter affections leading him to love himself instead (v. 19). Parents who love one another in the Lord will love their children in ways that nurture and encourage them (vv. 20, 21). Children must be taught to love the Lord and obey their parents who love them so that they may know the Lord’s pleasure as they grow (v. 20).

All of this takes patience, practice, and openness. We won’t always succeed, so we need to be ready to confess our failings, seek forgiveness, and take up the course of love anew.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

These verses strike at the heart of the issue in the same way the Ten Commandments and other Scriptures do where we have been given lists to follow. We are warned about our weaknesses before we blunder into mistakes. Family dynamics, Homefront Discipleship, can be tricky, and fraught with egos continually banging up against one another. So here is our checklist for making this work:

1. Wives submit.

2. Husbands love.
 3. Children obey.
 4. Fathers don't provoke.
- If these weren't perceived problems there would be no need to mention them.

The warnings for all are against pride; and that pride is the operative negative.
Love in Christ is the positive.

So, let's back up and look at the verse directly before these verses.

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17).

Jesus is always the clear example of love and humility.

And He is the only person who ever lived who did love perfectly.

And of all people, He is the only One who could ever have felt prideful about Himself. But He didn't.

In fact, "...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11).

Truly this puts us squarely in our place. Whatever position we have in Homefront Discipleship should be done gladly, and to the glory of God. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk. 9:23). "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:38).

Jesus showed us how to do it. Paul gave us guidelines. Our job is to just do it.

Reflection

1. Why are home and family such important places for practicing discipleship?
2. How can we deal with the pride that can throttle the exercise of love in the home?
3. How can we make "in the Lord" or "to the Lord" a more operative principle in our lives?

Again Paul has written, "in the Lord," at once laying down the laws of obedience, producing shame in them. For this, he says, is well-pleasing to the Lord. See how Paul would have us live not only according to natural principles but, prior to this, according to what is pleasing to God. In this way we also gain a reward. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Colossians 10

Help me today, Lord, to encourage my fellow believers to...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 71.17-24

Where will you need to flee to your Rock of habitation today? Prepare for that now, by offering yourself and all your activities to the Lord and for His glory.

Sing Psalm 71.17-24, 3

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O Lord, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.

Forsake me not when I am old, 'til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;

my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Your righteous deeds are great and true. O God, there is no one like You!
Though many troubles I have seen, You will revive my soul again!

Refrain

Increase my greatness, comfort me, and unto You shall praises be.
Your truth I will exalt full well, O Holy One of Israel!

Refrain

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; Lord, humble all who do me wrong.

Refrain

6 From the Heart, Heartily

Opening Prayer: Psalm 126.1, 2

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

Sing Psalm 126.1, 2

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Read Colossians 3.22-25

Preparation

1. How are we supposed to live our daily lives?
2. What awaits us as we live this way?

Meditation

Here is an example of how we should address the social ills of our day. In Paul’s day, slavery was a given. It was a dehumanizing and often brutal institution. In his epistles, Paul indirectly eroded this institution by focusing on the equality of love and mutuality that exists among all Kingdom citizens (cf. Gal. 3.26-29; Philem. 1.8-16).

But the way to deal with social ills is to keep seeking the rule of King Jesus, which we do by growing in the Lord and through faithful and humble service, according to where the Lord has placed us. Wives, husbands, and children have their calling. So did slaves, and so do employees and employers in our day (cf. 4.1). We are to serve wherever the Lord sends us (Jn. 20.21), “in sincerity of heart” and with our eye firmly set on the Lord. The Kingdom comes through us, not as we seek to tear down deadly institutions and practices, but as we infuse them with new life and the Presence of the King of glory.

This principle applies to all our work (v. 23). Whatever we do – in the home, on the job, at church, among our neighbors, out in our community – if we set our minds on the things that are above, and especially on the reward and inheritance that awaits us beyond this life – Jesus Christ Himself! – we will heartily and sincerely do all our work to honor our beautiful and gracious King, and to further our journey toward Him.

And if we don’t, if instead of the righteousness of the Kingdom we choose the unrighteous ways of the world, well, God knows how to deal with us, and it isn’t always pleasant (Heb. 12.3-11).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Regardless of what we have been called to do, we must do it “in sincerity of heart, fearing God” (v. 22).

We are also told that whatever we do, we are to “do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (v. 23), because we “serve the Lord Christ” (v. 24). And if we don’t do it, we will be repaid without partiality.

Sounds good. We’re always complaining about things not being fair. Well, here we have it, fair discipline!

So whoever we are and whatever we do we will be treated fairly by God.

But there is an extreme upside to all of this; and that is the fact that through our God-pleasing attitude others will want to glorify Him because of it. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5.16). Peter also tells us to have honorable conduct that when others observe it, they will glorify God. (1 Pet. 2.12) And when Peter took up his teaching on family matters he summarized with this: “Finally, all of *you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3.8,9).

That’s what we receive when we work from the heart, heartily as unto the Lord!

Reflection

1. What does that mean to “work heartily” or to work “from the heart”?
2. What is “the reward of the inheritance” that we seek through our faithful obedience?
3. How does God “repay” whenever we fall into unrighteous works?

The strong motivation to serve someone well is found in the future reward that Christ gives to those who are faithful in this service. We normally think we receive eternal rewards for spiritual practices like reading the Bible, prayer, or evangelism. Here Paul asserts that all work done to the honor of Christ will bring an eternal reward. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes on Colossians 3.22-25

Lord, let my faith be only in Jesus, and only according to Your Word, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 126.3-6

Pray that God will revive and keep you in the true faith, and that He will use you to sow that faith in the souls of others today.

Sing Psalm 126.2-6

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav’nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

7 The Bond of Perfection

Opening Prayer: Psalm 116.1-6

I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.
The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

Sing Psalm 116.1-6

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise To God Who Reigns Above*](#))

I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.
The snares of death encompassed me; hell’s grip could not unloosened be;
distress and anguish pressed me.

I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Read Colossians 3; meditate on verse 14.

Preparation

1. How does Paul describe love in verse 14?
2. What illustrations of this “bond” does he provide in Colossians 3?

Meditation

From the beginning of his letter to the Colossians, Paul has emphasized their love for one another. Their love prompted him to pray for them (1.3, 4). He longed for them to be knit together in love (2.2), a knitting love that consists in Jesus Himself (2.19; cf. Eph. 4.16). He detailed the various ways such love is expressed among believers: “tender mercies, kindness, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another...” (3.12-17).

When we put on Jesus, we put on love. He is the bond of love Who knits us together as members of His one Body, the Church. In Him, and in His love, we press on toward perfection, knowing we will only be made perfect in love when we see Jesus face to face and are like Him (1 Jn. 3.1-3).

The love we have for the Lord and one another keeps us from loving the base things of this world, which we happily put off that we might be clothed with Jesus (vv. 5-10).

Love is the glue of all our relationships – in the family, at work, in the church, and as we go into the world (vv. 18-22). Everything we do should show that we love and honor our Lord and our neighbors (v. 23). We fix our minds and the eye of our heart (Eph. 1.15ff.) on Jesus (3.1-4), basking in His love, being absorbed into Him and clothed with Him; and as we do, we cannot help but go forth in love, filled with the peace of God and overflowing with thanksgiving (v. 15).

The more we become steeped in the Word of Christ, the more we are clothed with Him and formed into His likeness (v. 16; cf. 2 Cor. 3.12-18), and the more His love, like rivers of living water, flows from us to our world (Jn. 7.37-39).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (3.14).

So above everything else that we could ever put on or into our lives, love is the best because it sticks people together, both to God and to one another. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4.19). And this bonds us to Him and to others. Or it should.

Bonding puts things together. It is the whole point of glue. The purpose and calling of Elmer’s and paste and epoxy and all adhesives is to stick stuff together. Paul wants us to understand what he is saying, so he uses a medium that we can all relate to: gooey stickiness. And here it is a good thing. Not something like on our kid’s hands that we immediately want to wipe off; but a mess we are to leave on, that bonds us to others.

In this situation, it is seen as perfection! Paul tells us that it supersedes all abilities: prophecy, being able to understand all mysteries, having all knowledge, faith to move mountains, supreme generosity and even martyrdom (1 Cor. 13.1-13). It is the end all be all of life. To love as Jesus loved: “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus; that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5.14,15).

Paul tells us to “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1). Let us go forth to imitate them in this love that “is the glue of all our relationships”.

Reflection

1. Why does love have the power to “knit” us to one another? How does that work?
2. As we put on Jesus, we put on love. Explain.
3. Can we expect to increase in love apart from setting our mind on the things that are above? Explain.

Now what Paul wishes to say is that there is no benefit in those things, for all those things fall apart, unless they are done with love. This is the love that binds them all together. Whatever good thing it is that you mention, if love be absent, it is nothing, it melts away. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Colossians 8

Bind me to Yourself in love, O Lord, and help me to love others as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 116.7-19

In prayer, rehearse the many ways God binds Himself to you in love each day. Give Him thanks and

praise. Seek a greater measure of His salvation, that you may love Him and the people in your Personal Mission Field with more of Jesus' love.

Sing Psalm 116.7-19

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*](#))

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
and pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart – save me, Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your Presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What does it mean to set your mind on the things that are above? Why should we do this? How can we improve in this discipline?
2. Why should we “put to death” worldly lusts and practices? How do these hinder our faith in Jesus?
3. Why does Paul say that Jesus is the love that knits us to one another? How can we “put on” Jesus more consistently, so that we increase in such love?
4. What rules in our heart as we put on the love of Jesus? What is that like? What does God do to keep us from straying into unrighteousness? What is that like?
5. What’s the most important lesson you have learned from Colossians 3? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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