

Growing Up: Living in Christ

Goldstone Church – 06-Mar-16 10:30am

Colossians 3:18-4:9

Introduction

This is our last visit to the book of Colossians in this series. During the past weeks we've looked at why Apostle Paul wrote the letter in the first place, and studied Paul's prayer for the Colossian church. We looked at Paul's wonderful description of Jesus Christ, and heard again of His supremacy.

We've also looked at the dangers of adding anything to Jesus. You can't add to Jesus.

Jesus + Nothing = Everything

Jesus + Anything = Nothing

This passage follows on from last week. Colossians 1 & 2 are about Christian Doctrine. From Colossians 3 onwards, Paul explains how this teaching is applied to daily life becoming more focused and detailed. Paul is saying that these wonderful truths about Jesus Christ are equally relevant to the whole of life, as well as individual people and specific situations.

These verses are the equivalent of a close up view. But this makes more sense with a wider perspective. As a result, a summary of Colossians 3:1-17 is needed.

1. KNOWING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

(Colossians 3:1-11)

Paul starts with an amazing summary of first 2 chapters:

- a. **Seek the Heavenly** (v.1-4). Set your sights on the realities of heaven.
- b. **Slay the Earthly** (v.5-9). Get rid of any bad habits that damage your relationship with Jesus Christ.
- c. **Strengthen the Christly** (v.10-11). Seek to become more like Jesus Christ; by renewing 3 things:
 - i. Renew your mind.
 - ii. Renew your relationships.
 - iii. Renew your Priorities.

2. SHARING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

(Colossians 3:12-17)

We put off the old self, and clothe ourselves in...

- a. The Grace of Christ.
- b. The Peace of Christ.
- c. The Word of Christ.
- d. The Name of Christ.

'As we have received, so we give.'

3. LIVING OUT THE LOVE OF CHRIST

(Colossians 3:18-4:1)

In this section, Paul gives very practical instructions about how to apply Christian teachings and principles into everyday life. He focuses on 3 key relationships:

- (i) the relationship between a husband and wife,
- (ii) relationships between parents and children, and
- (iii) relationship with work.

When someone becomes a Christian, there is a profound change in that person – which also changes the relationships that they have with those around them also changes. Paul is saying that Christians need to Live Out their individual Love of Christ in the context of the daily relationships that they have with others.

a) A relationship of **Love & Submission** [Husbands & Wives] (v.18-19)

Paul speaks to wives first because of their new standing as Christians. In Paul's time, women were discounted and ignored, but, as Christians, they had a new freedom and status. As a result, Paul needed to give them some instructions.

Need to clarify the word "submit". The original meaning was a military term, meaning "to arrange under rank". In the armed forces, the fact that one person is a 'private' and another person is an 'officer' doesn't make one better than the other. It just means that they have different ranks. The chain of command is there to establish order. Similarly, God does everything "in a fitting and orderly way." (1 Corinthians 14:40)

What Paul is teaching - that wives are to submit to their husband - does not suggest in any way that the man is better than the woman. It just means that the man has the responsibility of headship and leadership in the home. This is a loving leadership.

Both husband and wife must submit themselves to God, and to each other (Ephesians 5:21). This is a relationship of mutual respect - under the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Husbands have the responsibility to love their wife. The word for "love" is 'AGAPE', which is a sacrificial and serving love. This is much more than romantic love. This is an active, all-inclusive, committed love for someone. "*The measure of a man's love for his wife is not seen only in gifts and words, but in acts of sacrifice and concern for her happiness and welfare.*"

A happy marriage doesn't come automatically, it needs to be worked at - all the time – as they walk together, in mutual respect and loving obedience and submission to God.

Application: when nearly 1 in 2 marriages in UK end in divorce, Christians need to stand up and take note. There is an immediate opportunity to Live Out the Love of Christ in the context of our marriage relationships.

b) A relationship of **Encouragement & Obedience** [Parents & Children] (v.20-21)

Significantly, Paul provides instruction for children – reflecting their new identity and status in Christ. Paul gives a straightforward instruction: a child's responsibility is to obey their parents. The bigger point that he's making is that respecting authority is a backbone to life – not just in the home, but in society as a whole.

v.20 and v.21 go together. Children do not *create* problems, they *reveal* them. Parents who cannot discipline themselves, will fail to discipline their children. Parents who do

not respect authority themselves, cannot exercise authority over others. Only as parents submit to one another and to God, will they be able to exercise a balanced authority over children. Paul instructs parents that they must encourage children and make it easy for them to obey.

Application: when nearly 1 in 3 young people in UK are living at home, Christians need to stand up and take note. There is an immediate opportunity to Live Out the Love of Christ in the context of our relationships with our children - and with our parents.

c) A relationship of **Honesty & Devotion** [Masters & Slaves] (v.22-4:1)

These verses may seem alien because they use emotive words like “slaves” and “masters”. But if we only focus on these words, we miss the point. The Apostle Paul is saying that, at all levels of human labour, Christians in the workplace must be wholly committed to the job. Paul is talking about our attitude towards our work, not the actual job description. As a Christian, we must be honourable and devoted to our work.

Paul adds that our motivation for work is not the money. Instead, our enthusiasm to work is because we have an opportunity to turn the job into an act of worship. “Work for the true Master – Christ”.

Application: when nearly 3 out of 4 people in UK have a job of some sort, Christians need to stand up and take note. There is an immediate opportunity to Live Out the Love of Christ in the context of our relationship to what we do at work.

Living out the Love of Christ is a practical, day-to-day activity. We need to seek a continuing in-filling of the Holy Spirit to express His love in our relationships at home and at work.

4. SPEAKING OUT THE LOVE OF CHRIST

(Colossians 4:2-9)

“*Share the gospel at all times, and, if necessary, use words*” (St Francis of Assisi). This is a helpful statement, encouraging Christians to Live Out the Love of Christ through our conduct and our attitude. However, the same statement can justify not actually speaking out the Gospel at all!

God created the world (Genesis 1) by *speaking* the world into existence: “God said”. The power of speech is a gift of God and we need to use it.

Paul points out 4 important ‘Ministries of Speech’:

a) **Praying** (v.2-3a)

The Apostle Paul starts and ends his letter by referring to prayer; clearly he considered prayer vitally important. He doesn’t hesitate to pray for people, and equally open to ask others to pray for him.

Paul highlights four aspects of prayer:

- i. **Faithfulness**. This devotion to prayer means keeping on keeping-on praying. Praying so regularly that it’s as normal to us as breathing.

- ii. **Watchfulness.** This refers to being awake and alert as we pray. (The opposite of an autopilot turned on). Watchful prayer is praying with a spiritual energy and awareness of what is actually happening.
- iii. **Thankfulness.** If all we do is ask, we are being selfish. Thanksgiving is an essential element of prayer.
- iv. **Purposefulness.** “Pray for us” says Paul; let your prayers for me be targeted and specific. *“The purpose of prayer is not to get man’s will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth.”* We need to pray with a purpose.

b) **Proclaiming the Word** (v.3b-4)

Paul wrote Colossians while he was in prison in Rome. He was in jail because he was preaching the Gospel to the *Gentiles*. Yet he asks for prayer that God will help him to continue doing the very thing that had resulted in his arrested - to preach the Word of God. Acts 6:4 indicates that speaking out the Word of God is empowered by prayer. The two go together – and mustn’t be separated.

c) **Witnessing to Non-Christians** (v.5-6)

The word “outsiders” (v.5) literally means ‘the other side of the door’. By contrast, Christians are *inside* the family of Christ. We need to pray that we will act wisely and behave honourably in our daily life, so that, when the opportunity arises, what we say about Christ to non Christians will be consistent with our actions and attitudes. The walk and the talk must be in harmony.

d) **Sharing Burdens** (v.7-9)

Paul didn’t put all the details of his situation in the letter. Instead, he let Tychicus and Onesimus share the news. Paul shared his burdens with 2 special friends, who then shared the burdens with the church in Colossae.

As we share our concerns with special friends support is received through prayer.

CONCLUSION

This passage (and the whole of Colossians) speaks very specifically into key areas of our daily lives. Being a Christian doesn’t *just* mean Knowing about the Love of Christ. Being a Christian means, applying that knowledge and Living Out the Love of Christ within the context of our daily relationships. Being a Christian means Speaking Out the Love of Christ to those that we meet, through Prayer, through Proclamation, through Witnessing, and through Sharing Burdens.

And as we draw this series in Colossians to a close, pray that these studies will stay with us, and challenge every aspect of our daily lives.

- **Let us Grow in Knowing the Love of Christ.**

May the supremacy of Christ overflow in our hearts. Let us fix our sights on the realities of heaven, such that it renews our Minds, our Relationships and our Priorities.

- **Let us Grow in Showing the Love of Christ.**

May we put on afresh the Grace, the Peace, the Word and the Name of Christ. May these new ‘clothes’ transform us from the inside out.

- **Let us Grow in Living Out the Love of Christ.**

May our relationships at home and at work be forever impacted by our *visible* love for Jesus Christ.

- **Let us Grow in Speaking Out the Love of Christ.**

May we open our mouths and speak words of love, ...

- Through our Prayers with and for each other,
- Through what we say about God's Word, the Bible,
- Through our walk and talk with non-Christians,
- As we share our burdens and concerns with one another.

God is inviting us and wanting us to Grow and develop our relationship with Him.

Amen