

Growing Up: Demonstrating Christ

Goldstone Church – 28-Feb-16 10:30am

Colossians 3:1-17

Introduction

We are continuing our series in the book of Colossians; the passage before us today gives a key transition. Generally speaking, in Colossians 1-2, the Apostle Paul teaches big Christians truths that need to be thought about and worked through. From Colossians 3 onwards, Paul unpacks the truths by explaining how they need to be applied to daily life. If the first half of the book is “theoretical”, the second half is more “practical”. How do these truths impact and affect how we live our daily lives as Christians?

1. KNOWING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

Paul encourages the Colossian Christians to yearn for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul’s profound and breath-taking description of Jesus in Colossians 1:15-20, is a catalyst for a personal relationship with Him. Jesus is worth getting to know because (Col 1:15) *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation”*.

Paul encourages this relationship with Jesus Christ:

a) **Seek the Heavenly** (v.1-4).

v.1b *“set your hearts on things above”* (NLT) *“set your sights on the realities of heaven”*

Paul is countering the false teachers (the Gnostics), who said that “being in the know” would make them spiritually special. Paul reminds the Colossians that, as Christians:

- i. They have Died with Christ (v.3a)
- ii. They have been Raised with Christ (v.1)
- iii. They Live with Christ (v.4)
- iv. They are Hidden in Christ (v.3)
- v. They are Glorified in Christ (v.4)

The common theme: as Christians, we are “in Christ”. Everything we are is because of who Jesus is. As Christians, we set our sights on the realities of heaven, because that is where Jesus is seated – at the place of utmost honour, at the right hand of God.

“Setting our sights on heaven” means that the practical, everyday issues of life are looked at from a heavenly perspective.

b) **Slay the Earthly** (v.5-9).

Paul switches from the positive to the negative. In addition to focusing on the issues that help and nurture spiritual growth, our relationship with Jesus also grows and deepens as we avoid the things that prevent or hinder this relationship.

The negative issues that Paul lists (v.5 & v.8b) are equally valid today. These earthly activities are all cancerous behaviours and attitudes; activities that produce a downward spiral. They all lead us away from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul simply says (v.8a) to be rid of them – and do it straight away. The word “now” has an immediacy and an urgency.

c) **Strengthen the Christly** (v.10-11).

This is the product of the previous 2 points.

Because we are alive in Christ, we set our sights on the realities of heaven. And, because we died with Christ, we rid ourselves – we put to death all the sinful activities that belonged to our past life. As a result, we can become like Jesus.

“God wants to renew us and make us into the image of His Son!” In other words, God renews our character and personality to reflect the image of Jesus. We still keep our own individuality; our lives are transformed to mirror the attitudes and values that honour God’s Son!

Christians become more and more Christ-like by renewing 3 things:

i. **Renew Your Mind** (v.10b)

v.10b *“renewed in knowledge”*. Echoed in Romans 12:2, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* As we grow in our knowledge of God’s Word, the Bible, through the power of the Holy Spirit we will be transformed from the inside out. We will have a new mind-set.

ii. **Renew Your Relationships** (v.11a)

In Christ everyone is equal, there are no nationalities or different religious groups. In Christ there is a new society, a new family, a new people-group – with Jesus at the centre. As a result, there is no bias towards anyone. This will be reflected in our relationships with fellow Christians. Our relationships will be renewed.

iii. **Renew Your Priorities** (v.11b)

v.11b *“Christ is all, and is in all”*. Because our identity is fully integrated with Christ, our priority will be to follow Him in loving obedience. We will seek and keep to His agenda because it deepens our relationship with Him. Our priorities will be renewed.

2. SHOWING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

The first word (v.12) – *“therefore”* – is there to make the connection between the verses. What follows is the outcome and consequence of what has just been taught.

The Apostle Paul gives an image of “clothing”; the putting off and the putting on of clothes. v.9 says that Christians have *“taken off your old self”*. v.12 says, *“clothe yourselves”*. Clothe yourselves with (put on):

a) **The Grace** [of Christ] (v.12-14)

The virtues that Paul lists in v.12-14 (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love) can be summed up in just one word: Grace.

Definition: *“God’s Grace is His favour towards underserving sinners”*. God loves us even though we don’t deserve His love.

- i. God’s grace has made you *“God’s chosen people”* (v.12a).
- ii. God’s grace has made you a *“Holy”* people (v.12a).
‘Holy’ means “set apart”. God’s grace has set you apart from the sinful world.
- iii. God’s grace has made you a *“dearly loved”* people (v.12a).
It is extravagant and lavish.
- iv. God’s grace has made you a *“forgiven”* people (v.13).

Put altogether, (i) - (iv), that is God's Grace.

Having received the Grace of God, our responsibility as Christians is to Show this Grace to those around us. 'As we have received, so we give' (Matt 10:8 paraphrased).

Some specific examples.

- Show God's grace in the way we have *compassion* for others.
- Show God's grace in the way we express *kindness* to others.
- Show God's grace through our *humility* around others,
- Show God's grace through our *gentleness* of others,
- Show God's grace through our *patience*, through our *forgiveness*, and through our *love* of others.

b) **The Peace** [of Christ] (v.15)

v.15a "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*". Paul moves from character to conduct. People will know we are Christians, as we show the peace of Christ in our hearts.

The word "rule" is an athletic term, referring to the Umpire in the Greek games; people who decided if someone was eligible to participate in the games. Put this meaning into this verse, and we see that the peace of Christ is the Judge - it's the test for our hearts. When we follow God purposes in loving obedience, we will have His peace within our hearts. That's the test.

Having received the Peace of God, our responsibility as Christians is to Show this Peace to those around us. As we have received, so we give.

c) **The Word** [of Christ] (v.16)

v,16a "*Let the message [word] of Christ dwell among you*". The word of Christ is the Bible.

The word "dwell" means "to feel at home". If we have experienced the Grace of God, and the Peace of God, then the Word of God will feel at home in our hearts. The Bible is not a stranger in our lives. Instead, the Bible will be a constant companion.

"God's Word always magnifies Jesus Christ".

Having received the Word of God, our responsibility as Christians is to Show the Word in action to those around us. As we have received, so we give.

d) **The Name** [of Christ] (v.17)

In our society, we're only interested in someone's name for what to call them. In Bible times, a name was important, e.g. in the Old Testament, God changed a person's name to signify a new status or an important experience. As Christians, we carry the name of Christ. Being a Christian means we are identified with Christ – we belong to Jesus Christ.

His name also gives us authority. In the name of Jesus, we have authority to pray. Because Jesus Christ is God, and He has died for us, we have authority in His name.

This authority has consequences. As Christians, everything that we say and do will be associated with the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, everything we say and do must honour the name that we represent.

Having received and been identified with the Name of Christ, our responsibility as Christians is to honourably Show and represents the Name in action to those around us. As we have received, so we give.

CONCLUSION

This passage is both theoretical and practical. For the Colossian Christians, this practical application was essential. In Paul's day, the pagan religions said nothing about personal morality or conduct. In those days, someone could quite easily worship an idol, seemingly in full sincerity, then, when the ceremony was finished, they would just go back to their old sinful ways. Sadly, this is still the case for many people today.

Being a Christian is different. Christianity declares a new truth in our society. Being a Christian means that what we believe has a direct connection and link with how we behave. Because we Know the Love of Christ, it naturally follows that we Show the Love of Christ.

This passage presents us with a challenge: how balanced are our Christian lives? Are we focusing more on the 'Knowing the Love of Christ' part – and glossing over the 'Showing the Love of Christ'?

Or are we trying to 'Show the Love of Christ' in our own strength, without first clothing ourselves in The Grace, The Peace, The Word and The Name of Christ?

- Because we have received the Grace of Christ in our lives, our response is to live for Him.
- Because we have received the Peace of Christ in our lives, our response is to follow Him in loving obedience.
- Because we have been enriched by the Word of Christ, and given authority through the Name of Christ, our response is to honour and glorify Him.

Let us be both thoughtful and practical in our Christian lives.

Let us Demonstrate Christ.

Let our hearts declare: as we have received, so we give.

Amen