

Scripture Reference: Colossians 3:1-4:1

Date: December 28, 2014

Title: "My Prayer For You"

Focus: Transformation into the Character of God

Paul wrote Colossians while imprisoned following his third missionary journey (60-65 AD). Colossae is located in modern south central Turkey. Paul had never been to Colossae. The fellowship there was the result of the work of Epaphras.

As an Apostle, Paul was prompted to write this letter in response to some who were bringing in heretical teaching regarding Jesus and His work of redemption. Given this, the book is strong in teaching about Christ and salvation.

At about the half way mark, chapter 3, as with most of Paul's letters, there is a notable shift from teaching to application. In the case of Colossians, it is a shift from what can be known about Jesus and the salvation He provides, to living in the light of the Redeemer and Eternal Life.

vv. 1-4; "Raised with Christ"

Being a *Christian* is being a disciple, a follower of Jesus. It entails the experience of spiritual rebirth. What Jesus characterized as being "*born again* [from above]" (John 3:3).

When people undergo salvation, they are redeemed from their sins, instilled with a new nature (the Holy Spirit) and thereafter are to live after this new life. To the believers in Rome Paul explained it this way.

Romans 6:3-7; "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through*

baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

Religion, no matter how noble the aim, is the attempt through human effort to manage and transform behavior to comply with some standard which actually or is perceived to have come from God.

A relationship with God is nothing like this. It entails the death of a person's nature and the raising of the life of Christ in him or her.

Therefore, experiencing the life of Christ within, the focus on the disciple is to "*set [his or her] mind on things that are above, not on thing that are on earth*" (v. 2).

Raised from the death of one's own actions, the disciple is to follow his or her master "*in His steps*" (1 Peter 2:21).

What does it look like to be "*raised with Christ,*" to live the new life?

vv. 5-11; Drop Your *Earth Suit*

Light and dark are mutually exclusive. One cannot abide in the presence of the other.

Similarly, the practices of the human nature (what the Bible refers to as the “flesh”) are *incompatible* with the presence of the life of Christ.

As a result, Paul calls on the Colossian believers to “*put to death . . . what is earthly in you*” (v. 5). He then goes on to list what is associated with the earth suit:

Sexual immorality - Any form of human sexuality outside the context of a monogamous marriage relationship, i.e. fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, pedophilia, etc.

Impurity - Vileness, immorality, being *dirty*

Passions - Desires that rule and run a life, good, bad or otherwise

Evil Desires - Wickedness in thought

Covetousness – Longing for and wanting what others have (discontent)

Anger

Wrath - Anger acted upon

Malice - Evil desires acted upon

Slander - Gossip

Obscene Talk - Profanity

This is not an exhaustive list of the deeds of one’s humanity. However, all of these, each one, is associated with the unredeemed nature. They have nothing to do with the nature of the new life God has placed in the disciple.

These DO NOT come from The Father. They are purely and totally emanation of the life lived apart from God.

vv. 12-17; Put on Christ

Stripping off the earth suit is necessary to being replaced by the nature and person of Christ. Who Jesus is and does define who the disciple is and what he or she does.

Transformation into the character of Jesus is the work of God. However, it also involves activity on the part of the disciple.

Therefore, Paul commands his readers to “*put on*”:

Compassionate Hearts - This is to let compassion direct decisions and actions.

Kindness - Not just a call to be kind in action, but to be kind, generous, good and upright in person.

Humility - To think properly about one’s self, not too highly, not too low either.

Meekness - To be meek is not to be weak. Meekness is the opposite of passion. Meekness is acting from a foundation of being comfortable with who one is.

Patience

Forgiveness

Love - Commitment and devotion that characterizes God.

The Peace of Christ - Calm and tranquility resulting from confidence in Jesus

The Words of Christ - Embodying what Jesus said.

Teaching One Another - Disciples have the responsibility to “*build up one another in the most holy faith*” (Jude 1:20).

Admonishing One Another - Believers must also push back against the excuses and practices of one another, to challenge each other in the faith.

v. 3:18-4:1; Christ Realized in Everyday Life

Life is the opportunity to let Jesus’ life be lived out. Paul points out some of these.

The goal of sanctification is not that Jesus followers should be the best people they can be. But, that disciples reflect the reality of Christ lived in their life situation.

If Jesus were you, what would that look like?

The Last Eighteen Inches

God’s desire is for all come to a relationship with Him (2 Peter 3:9). When this happens, His person begins to be developed in that individual. This is called, *sanctification*.

The goal of everything a community of faith does is to provide people the opportunity to come to a saving faith in Jesus and encourage them in their relationship with God.

It is my prayer I have played a part in this endeavor and that despite whoever may occupy the role of pastor, He too will pursue this goal.