

**COLOSSIANS 3-4:1**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Colossians chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Over the last few weeks in our study of Colossians we have been focused on doctrine. This section covers Colossians chapters 1 and 2.

And the reason this was so important is because heresy was beginning to creep into the church and was threatening the life of the church and Paul tells them that they don't need that garbage, they are sufficient in Christ.

And how Paul does this is as follows. First of all, he shows them that we are sufficient in Christ as he portrays Christ's preeminence in creation, in redemption, and in the church in Colossians chapter 1.

Then, he shows us that we are sufficient in Christ in Colossians chapter 2 as Paul shows them that outside of Christ they are not complete, they are not sufficient and he looks at the emptiness of the worlds philosophies, religious legalism, mysticism or a man-made spirituality, and asceticism or a life of self-denial to attain righteousness before God.

Now, as we move into Colossians chapter 3 this evening and chapter 4 next time, we will see the application of the information that Paul gave to us in Colossians chapters 1 and 2.

He is going to show us how we are to walk since we have the right information before us. And folks, that is wisdom or the proper application of the proper information!

And Paul does that in many of his letters. He gives us doctrine and then he speaks of the application of that doctrine or how we are to walk!

We see that in Ephesians as Paul spends three chapters dealing with doctrine, all that we have in Christ, and then in Ephesians chapters 4 through 6 he speaks of the application of that doctrine.

Paul opens up Ephesians chapter 4 like this, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”**

I like the way that the Amplified Bible puts Ephesians 4:1, **“I THEREFORE, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to and beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behavior that is a credit to the summons to God’s service.]”**

In other words, because of all that God has done for you, because you are representing Him before a lost and dying world, walk worthy of this new life you have in Christ. It just makes sense.

And let me say this, the order is significant!

You see, doctrine must always precede duty and the reason being is that Christian living depends on Christian learning!

I know someone who posted on Facebook that said, basically, “We just need to be nice to each other and we will sort this religion stuff out later!”

The reality is, you can’t be nice to each other, the way that God wants, apart from knowing exactly what He wants! And there is nothing to sort out, Jesus said that He is the way, the truth and the life and no one, not even one person, will see the Father except through Him. Pretty straightforward, no real discussion needed here!

And here is the bottom line, as Paul tells us in Colossians 2:17, **“... the substance is Christ.”**

Thus, in knowing that, we need to walk accordingly.

As we get into Colossians chapter 3 tonight Paul is going to show us how to live out our Christian faith because all these other things, the things he has spoken of in the first two chapters of Colossians; Gnostic mysticism, Jewish legalism, radical asceticism will have no effect on how we live out our faith because it has no power to help us live that way. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can!

So with that as our background, let's begin reading in Colossians chapter 3, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

### **COLOSSIANS 3**

#### **VERSE 1**

I want you to see how Paul links doctrine with how we live out our faith.

You see, practical Christian living is built upon a foundation of theological truth!

And what is that truth he is speaking of here?

Since Jesus has been raised from the dead, then our identification with Him becomes real because we were raised with Christ and thus, we can seek those things which are above.

That is what Paul said in Colossians 2:13, "**And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.**"

And I like what one writer had to say about this. He wrote, “The opening verses of chapter 3 sustain the closest connection with the closing verses of chapter 2. There the apostle reminds the Colossians that ascetic regulations are of no real value in restraining indulgence of the flesh. The only remedy for sinful passions is found in the believers’ experience of union with Christ.” (Vaughan)

Paul is speaking of the new life we have in Christ and yet, how many Christians want to live in the past, in that old life? How many churches want to look like the world and in doing so, they are falling back on that old life?

We are a new creation in Christ and our focus is not on all that this world has for us, but what Christ has for us!

If we are living in the past, that old life, Paul will show you what will flow from your life, and it is not pretty, and it never was!

You see, since we have been raised with Christ or literally *“to be co-resurrected”* with Him, why would we want to focus our attention on worldly things?

Our life should be focused on Christ for you will receive heavenly direction for earthly duties as you do.

Now some would argue and say, *“You are so heavenly minded you are no earthly good!”*

I disagree, in fact I wish I was more heavenly minded. I find myself too often so worldly-minded! I truly believe that you can’t be any earthly good unless you are heavenly minded, and I think that is what Paul is talking about here!

That word, **“If”** in verse 1 should be translated *“since.”* Since we have been raised with Christ is the idea here!

Now, what are we to do since we have been raised with Christ?

We are to **SEEK** those things that are above!

The Greek word for “**seek**” is ZETEO, (dzay-the’-o) and it carries with it the idea of “**to seek or strive for earnestly.**”

And in the Greek this verb is in the present imperative, which means that this should be a continuous, ongoing effort on our part!

Let me give you a few examples to show you what I mean striving earnestly, not giving up!

I am sure you have heard of Albert Einstein. But, did you know that he was dismissed from school in Munich because he was thought to lack interest in his studies?

Not only that, but he failed to pass an examination to get into a polytechnic school in Zurich.

Then he became a tutor for boys in a Zurich boarding house, but that did not last long, he got fired from the job.

But he did not give up and you know the rest of the story!

Then there is Lou Gehrig, who did not look like an athlete. In fact, Ty Cobb said of him, “Look at those piano legs – he’ll never last.”

I guess you can say that he was built to be hurt, and he was not going to last in baseball.

Well, that was not true. In fact, he was known as the “Iron Man” of baseball. He set an all-time record of 2,130 consecutive games played!

And lastly, there is the archaeologist Howard Carter and he dug and dug through tons of rubble and tons of discouragement and tons of ridicule. That was until he discovered the tomb of Tutankhamen, or as we know him, King Tut!

But you must keep your perspective on the things above, on the Lord Jesus Christ! Don't be discouraged, be directed by God! Think about this for a minute.

The psychologist says, "Look in."

The opportunist says, "Look around."

The optimist says, "Look ahead."

The pessimist says, "Look out."

But God says, "Look up!"

That is what we are to do, we need to be focused on Christ instead of being directed by the empty things of this world. And if you think about it, if you are directed by the things of this world, in the end, you will still be empty because only Christ will fulfill your life, bring that satisfaction to your life.

Solomon found that out as he wrote that all that is under the sun, and we would say all that is in this world, is emptiness, worthless, it will never satisfy, only the Lord will! May we keep that in mind because as we do, it will help us to walk accordingly!

I like the way that James Montgomery Boice summed this up for us. He wrote,

Our being raised from the dead with Christ means that we have been given new life. Our being taken up into heaven with Christ, our ascension, means that we have been given a new environment. We are no longer creatures only of this world, bound by what we can see and touch and smell and hear and taste. We are now creatures of the greater, heavenly realm who now, because of our union with Christ, think and work and speak in spiritual categories.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says that the Christian “is lifted up into an entirely new ‘thought realm.’ And he judges everything now in the light of it. He has a new standard of values; he assesses things in an entirely different way. What he wants to know about anything now is, not what sort of a ‘kick’ he will get out of it, not what sort of pleasure will it bring him; but rather, what is its value to his soul?”

- James Montgomery Boice

Thus, perspective is everything!

## VERSE 2

Paul just said that we are to, “**seek those things which are above**” but he does not stop there.

He goes on to say here in Colossians 3:2, that we are also to, “**set our minds on things above.**”

Again, if you want to be earthly good, to do what is right you better seek those things that are above, and you better get you mind set on the things that are from above!

Remember what Paul said in Romans 12:2, “**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**”

You see, we are not to be conformed to the things of this world, but we are to be transformed by renewing our minds in God.

How is that done?

Very simply by spending time in God's Word, in prayer, by engaging in things that will build us up and not tear us down or just entertain us, and by gathering together with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

What is then produced is godly behavior. But if we negate these things what is produced is ungodly behavior.

Where is your life, your mind set upon, what are you seeking?

May it be the Lord!

And think about it like this. A compass needle orients itself toward the north and thus, the Christian should orient himself towards heaven where Christ dwells! The things that are from above!

Now is everything earthly evil? Of course not, as one writer tells us, "'Earthly things' are not all evil, but some of them are. Even things harmless in themselves become harmful if permitted to take the place that should be reserved for the things above." (Vaughan)

Again, having the right perspective is important and we need to look down from a heavenly perspective.

Let me illustrate it like this.

Imagine that you lived in a Penthouse of a skyscraper, way up there. Now, living from that high up you would have a different perspective than someone living on the ground floor, right?

Of course you would! You can see all that is going on down below but if you lived on the ground floor, you would only be able to see what is right in front of you!

Now, apply that to our spiritual lives. Where I am living will not only give me a certain perspective, but it will also show me how I am to live.

And that can go both ways. From an earthly perspective, you are going to live to satisfy the flesh.

From a heavenly perspective, you are going to live to please God!

Listen to how Paul sums this up, the perspective he gives to us of who should be seen in our lives and what we wait for!

#### VERSES 3-4

Remember what Paul said back in Philippians 1:21, “**For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**”

Yes, in Philippians Paul was speaking of physical death, and how in that he would be with the Lord!

But what I want you to see is that as he lived, he did not live for himself, he did not want his life to be seen by others, but he wanted Christ to be seen in him! Jesus was his life!

His life was not this or that, his life was Christ and the same should be true for us!

And that is what Paul is saying here in Colossians 3:3, that we are dead, or the old man was crucified with Christ and we are a new creation in Christ!

Again, we need to understand that at the time of our salvation we died to sin, the old life or old man passed away and we have been raised up new in Christ.

Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 5:17, “**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**”

And in Romans 6:3-11 Paul tells us, **“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

And what happens in our life when we die to self, when we are raised in Christ?

Paul continues on to say, **“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”** Romans 6:12-14.

Now, here in Colossians 3:4, where Paul says, **“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”** I think what Paul is speaking of is the Rapture of the Church, when we are caught up to be with the Lord!

Remember what John wrote in I John 3:2-3, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

We will receive our resurrection bodies at the time of the Rapture, those who are alive and those who have died in Christ.

But I also think it goes beyond that because Paul speaks of us appearing with Him, and yes, when we are taken to glory at the Rapture that is true, but we also will be with Him when He returns in His second coming to set up His Kingdom on this earth!

John tells us in Revelation 19:11-16, **“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

I think we are that army that John speaks of.

And so, the key to living resurrection life is to have a life that is centered upon Christ because He is our life or as Paul put it in Galatians 2:20, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**

Now, as we read on, see how this is played out for us, what we are to do as we are focused on the things above, as we have set our mind on the things above, on Jesus!

### VERSES 5-7

Here is something that we do not hear too often in the church, the putting to death, the mortifying of our flesh and we are not to wait to do it, we are to do it now!

But why?

Look at how Paul opens Colossians 3:5, with the word, **“Therefore.”**

In other words, since you have been crucified with Christ. Since you have been raised with Christ. Since you are seeking those things that are above. Since you have set your mind on the things above. Since Christ is in you, then put to death that flesh!

Don't feed the flesh, don't play with the flesh, you crucify the flesh and then these works of the flesh will not be manifested in your life!

In fact, I want you to see how strong this is. One writer put it like this, “The verb nekrosate, meaning literally ‘to make dead,’ is very strong. It suggests that we are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes. We are to wipe them out, completely exterminate the old way of life.” (Vaughan)

And this is how we do it. We put to death the flesh in the sense of denying these things and considering them dead to us and us dead to them. “To gratify any sensual appetite is to give it the very food and nourishment by which it lives, thrives, and is active.” (Clarke)

And in these verses Paul speaks of sexual sins or fornication. He speaks of uncleanness or moral filth. He speaks of passion or uncontrollable lusts. And he speaks of evil desire or illicit cravings.

Then Paul speaks of covetousness or greed and this is truly where the other sins that Paul spoke of spring forth. It is a selfish desire and thus, it is idolatry.

And, as you can see here, they are coveting (lusting) after another’s body for sexual gratification.

Think about it, you covet a relationship with another woman, and you are married and where does it lead? It leads to fornication if you let it grow and don’t cut it off!

Thus, if you are content in the Lord you will not covet and give room for these other sins to grow by!

Now when we speak of sin and the coming judgment of God upon those who don’t come to Christ, the world laughs at us and they try to get us to see things through their perspective.

What I mean is that they want us to accept their sin. In regard to homosexuality, transgenderism, they want us to believe that they were born that way! No, they were not. In adultery, they want us to believe it is okay and that they are not in love with their spouse anymore, so what is the big deal! It is a big deal!

And we can go on, but don’t look at it from their perspective, they are wrong.

Seek those things that are above, set your mind on the things that are above, and you will see that, **“Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.”** Colossians 3:6.

Those who have rejected Jesus will go to Hell and then, at the Great White Throne Judgment their sinful behavior will determine the degree of punishment in the Lake of Fire, (Revelation 20:11-15).

Jesus put it this way in John 3:36, **“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”**

I think that is very clear, you may accept it or reject it but that does not change the truth of what Jesus said!

You might say that these are, *“Memories, of the way we were!”* And those memories are not too pretty, are they?

But for us as Christians they are in the past tense, we are not like the sons of disobedience, but like Christ!

Now, is it possible for a Christian to fall prey to these sins?

Tragically yes, but if they are part of their walk, if this is the way they are living and they are comfortable in their sin, I would question their salvation, I don't believe that they are saved.

Paul said in Romans 6:1-2, **“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”**

Thus, as a Christian you must ask yourself, *“Who will I identify myself with, Jesus or this world?”*

And understand that the choice you make will have consequences, one that is good and one that is bad!

Let's put this into the proper perspective as Spurgeon gives us this insight. He wrote, Christian, what hast thou to do with sin? Hath it not cost thee enough already? Burnt child, wilt thou play with the fire? What! When thou hast already been between the jaws of the lion, wilt thou step a second time into his den? Hast thou had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all thy veins once, and wilt thou play upon the hole of the asp, and put thy hand upon the cockatrice's den a second time? Oh, be not so mad! So foolish! Did sin ever yield thee real pleasure? Didst thou find solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to thine old drudgery, and wear the chain again, if it delight thee. But inasmuch as sin did never give thee what it promised to bestow, but deluded thee with lies, be not a second time snared by the old fowler – be free, and let the remembrance of thy ancient bondage forbid thee to enter the net again!

- Spurgeon, Evening by Evening, p. 151

I think that gives us a good perspective. May we have ears to hear and then hearts to obey!

#### VERSES 8-11

Here we see that Paul is speaking of removing all the traces of worldliness that is in us and he tells us to “**put off**” these things, which comes from the Greek word APOTITHEMI, (ap-ot-eeth'-ay-mee) and it is a word that speaks of removing clothes and in this case, removing the dirty clothes and putting on Christ!

I was reading this article and it was talking about the Great Plague that hit England in the 1660's. It was estimated that some 100,000 people died in this plague!

But here is the tragic part of it, they all did not have to die!

You see, when people died, and at this time mostly from the plague, they would take the clothes off the dead and they would give them to their family and friends. What that did was it would spread and perpetuate the plague!

How does that play out for us?

If we keep on those old defiled clothes, keep those sins in our life, as we hang around our Christian friends, as we go to church, we will infect and destroy the lives of others. Yes, it will affect us, but it will also affect others like the plague.

Take off those old garments and put on the new garments, put on Christ!

We just read of the sexual sins and Paul's focus here deals primarily with the sinful things we say, what comes out of our mouth!

James put it this way, **“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.”** James 1:26.

And you can read James, he hits what comes out of our mouth pretty heavily and we need to be careful what we say. We need to allow the Lord to tame our tongue, but don't use that as an excuse in regard to what you say. You do have control, you know what God wants you to say, your mind is set on the things above, live accordingly! God won't force you but He will show you what you are to say!

Look at these sins that Paul speaks of here:

- ANGER (ORGE) – This speaks of a deep, smoldering spirit. It is something that is festering inside of you!
- WRATH (THUMOS) – This speaks of a sudden outburst of anger like a volcano blowing its top and it is messy!
- MALICE (KAKIA) – This is referring to harming people by the words we say.

- BLASPHEMY (BLASPHEMIA) – This speaks of insults, put downs towards others in order to hurt them. In regard to this, James tells us, **“But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.”** James 3:8-10.
- FILTHY LANGUAGE (AISCHROLOGIA) – This speaks of obscene, derogatory words that will hurt others. Lightfoot translated it as “foul-mouthed abuse.”
- LIE (PSEUDOMAI) – This speaks of *“to utter an untruth or attempt to deceive by falsehood.”* Some try to justify their lies saying there are situations where you can lie to protect yourself or others. It is a situational lie! The problem I have with that is what Jesus said in John 8:44, **“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”** Thus, if you lie, or when you lie you are not imitating your heavenly Father but Satan!

And notice what Paul tells us what we are to do with these things. Paul tells us we are to take off these things, remove them from our lives because they are inconsistent with the child of God who is focused upon Christ. If we take these filthy clothes off, what are we to put on? Paul tells us in Colossians 3:10 as he speaks of putting on the new man, putting on Christ!

Now let me say this so you don't get the wrong idea that we have to try harder, be better, because that is not what Paul is saying when he talks about putting on and taking off.

In the Greek he doesn't use imperatives (commands that we do) but he uses infinitives (which describe things God has done for us).

The moment we got saved God has done this in our lives.

Then why do we still struggle, why do we still have to deal with these things.

Paul is speaking practically of our responsibility to live out in our daily lives, what God has done spiritually in us through Jesus.

You see, the moment you received Jesus the **“old man”** was put off. Not the old nature but the old man! You see, there is a difference.

The **“old man”** isn't our old nature because our old nature doesn't **grow** corrupt, it already **is** corrupt.

And, that old nature will be with us until the Rapture or we go home to be with the Lord. It will happen when we finally shed this physical body, **“the body of death”** and we receive that new body! (Romans 7:24)

So as we live out our faith, people should see Jesus in us. But many times we are not dressed appropriately and people are not seeing Jesus.

Let me show you what I mean.

There was a relative of ours who was very rich, he worked very hard and didn't spend much money, he saved it.

And many years ago, when we were living in Schaumburg, Illinois, he unexpectedly came to visit us.

I had never met him before. So when we picked him up at the train station I couldn't believe my eyes, even though I was warned of what to expect.

Here was this man who was dressed like a beggar, he had a suitcase that was held together with rope, he had no teeth because he didn't want to spend money to get new dentures.

He was not dressed consistently with who he was, the money he had. He was a millionaire and he lived as a beggar!

The same is true for Christians, we must dress ourselves in accordance to our new identity in Christ, we must put on Christ and put off the old self!

We have a choice to make what clothes we wear every day and we have a choice if we want to put on Christ or put on those old clothes of the old life!

What does this new life in Christ do for us? Listen again to what Paul says in Colossians 3:11, **“where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”**

The new man is now part of the family of God where there are no walls of division.

The walls of nationalism – Greek or Gentile and Jew were removed.

The walls of religion – circumcised or uncircumcised were removed.

The cultural walls – Barbarian or those who did not speak the Greek language and the Scythian or a wild savage that was a nomad were removed.

The social walls – slave or free were removed.

And this is all because we are part of the family of God in Christ. There should be no barriers to separate us, don't put up walls that Christ has torn down!

Paul said in Ephesians 2:14-16, **“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”**

Now, as we continue on, starting here in Colossians 3:12, Paul is going to list what putting on the new man looks like in our lives from a practical standpoint!

VERSES 12-17

Again we see this word, “**Therefore**” and the idea here is that since we have put off the old man and put on Christ, may these things flow from our lives!

And if you really think about it, this is what should flow from the lives of Christians, the person who has taken off the old garments, the filthy garments and has put on Christ!

These qualities that Paul speaks of here are to cover the new man.

Remember what Jesus said of how people will know if we are His or not? He said in John 13:34-35, “**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**”

Remember the song from years ago, “*They will know we are Christians by our love*”? May people know that we are His by our **LOVE!**

Let us take a look at these qualities that should flow from our lives as Christians:

- TENDER MERCIES (OIKTIRMOS) – This is speaking of compassion. Jesus showed us this quality in His life as we are told in Matthew 9:35-36, “**Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.**” May we have hearts filled with compassion towards people.
- KINDNESS (CHRESTOTES) – This is speaking of an unselfish spirit as you help others, looking out for others in need and then helping them.
- HUMILITY (TAPEINOPHROSUNE) – This is speaking of humbling yourself before others, to put others above you. Jesus, in Matthew 11:29 said, “**Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**” It is an absence of pride!
- MEEKNESS (PRAUTES) – This is speaking of denying yourself to minister to others, maybe even suffering so you can minister to them.

- LONGSUFFERING (MAKROTHUMIA) – This is speaking of self-restraint no matter what comes your way, what they may do to you.
- BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER – This is speaking of “to endure, to hold out in spite of persecution, threats, injury, indifference, or complaints and not retaliate.” It is putting up with people!
- FORGIVING – It is hard to harbor unforgiveness when you look at the Lord and see how much He has forgiven us of all our sins, all the wrongs we have done and will do!

Now, why do we struggle so much with this? What keeps us from not manifesting these qualities in our life?

***SELF!***

It is a choice on our part! You see, instead of being heavenly minded we are self-consumed, self-absorbed and then what flows from our life is not the nature of Jesus but the nature of the world!

What can we do about that?

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16, “**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**”

In other words, surrender yourself to the Holy Spirit, put off the old man and put on the Lord!

And here is the key, what holds all these things together, kind of the initiator of them.

And we see that in Colossians 3:14 – ***LOVE!***

Love is what all these other qualities spring-forth from, the ***AGAPE*** love of God.

Paul, in I Corinthians chapter 13 tells us, **“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails . . . And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”** I Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13.

If we would allow the love of God to fill our lives, then the love of God would flow from our lives!

Also, in Colossians 3:15, when Paul says to **“let the peace of God rule in your hearts”** he is basically saying, *“let the peace of God be the umpire in your life.”*

How do I know if what I am doing is right or wrong?

We allow God’s Word to guide us and give us peace about our actions, if it is right or to change our behavior if it is wrong! You see, if you want to go by your feelings in a situation, chances are you are going to be wrong, you are going to be way off, and you will even justify your wrong behavior.

We are told in Jeremiah 17:9-10, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”** Thus, allow God through His Word show you how to walk, what you should do!

Listen to what Warren Wiersbe wrote in regard to the peace of God in our lives and what happens when we lose it. He wrote,

When a Christian loses the peace of God, he begins to go off in directions that are out of the will of God. He turns to the things of the world and the flesh to compensate for his lack of peace within. He tries to escape, but he cannot escape himself! It is only when he confesses his sin, claims God's forgiveness, and does God's will that he experiences God's peace within.

When there is peace in the heart, there will be praise on the lips: "And be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15). The Christian out of God's will is never found giving sincere praise to God. When David covered up his sins, he lost his peace and his praise (Pss. 32; 51). When he confessed his sins, then his song returned.

- Warren Wiersbe

Then, as Paul continues on we see in Colossians 3:16-17 that Paul is admonishing us to have the Word of God abundantly fill our lives and as we do we then can minister to others within the body of Christ by teaching them the things of God and admonishing them or warning them of their wrong behavior. We keep each other accountable according to the Word of God! And please remember that the Word of God is the final authority on matters of the heart!

Not only that, but we can minister to others not only with the Word of God but with worship also, the worship of God with Psalms or songs out of the book of Psalms, with hymns or other songs of praise, with spiritual songs as opposed to secular songs. It is a life that is overflowing with the goodness of God!

And then Paul says that whatever you do, whatever you say, you are doing it unto the Lord. When you walk with that perspective, you will bring glory to God and minister to people!

VERSES 18-21

We dealt with relationships in Paul's letter to the Ephesians but let me say this. We are all one in Christ, there is no one more important or better than another.

But there is also order within the family unit, structure and thus, the husband is the head of the home!

And as you read this it is dealing with unity. What is the key to unity, not only unity in the family, but unity within the body of Christ?

Paul tells in Ephesians 5:21, "**submitting to one another in the fear of God.**"

Thus, in the family God has placed the husband as the spiritual leader of the family and wives are to submit to his authority. It is not a master/slave relationship, but a submission of love, allowing your husband to be the man God wants him to be. And this is all done in the Lord. If he asks you to do something illegal or against God's will, then that is the only time you don't have to submit. But please understand it is a beautiful relationship, one is not lording over the other.

One writer put it like this, "The form of the verb (*hypotassethe*, middle voice) shows that the submission is to be voluntary. The wife's submission is never to be forced on her by a demanding husband; it is the deference that a loving wife, conscious that her home (just as any other institution) must have a head, gladly shows." (Vaughan)

Also, men, you are to love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her. Do not be bitter towards you wife and I guess men, we must need to hear that! Don't call your wife "sugar cakes" and then treat her like dirt is the idea here. We are to have **AGAPE** love towards our wives.

And then Paul speaks of children. And for children who are living at home, they are to respect their parents, to honor them because in doing so they are respecting God's order of authority within the family unit. And for that matter, children are to respect, honor their parents even if they are not living at home!

For parents, we are not to discourage, put down our children, but encourage them. That does not mean we can't discipline them but when you do discipline them do so with the idea of restoration, of building them up, helping them to grow and not for demolition!

#### VERSES 22-4:1

Paul now looks at a slave's relationship to his master or today an employee's relationship to his boss and then he turns it around and looks at it from the other perspective.

Obviously Paul was speaking to Christian slaves and now employee's, that we are to do our best when the boss is looking and when he is gone because ultimately we are serving the Lord.

And when we do poorly or do something wrong on the job, don't expect favors or leniency because you are a Christian, in fact we should be held to a higher standard and how often we lower the bar. There are consequences to our actions whether they are good or bad. You see, being a Christian makes us more responsible, not less!

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 3:17, "**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.**" You represent the Lord in all that you do!

Now verse 1 of Colossians chapter 4 should be included in chapter 3, it is a bad chapter break here. Keep in mind that the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired but were added much later so we could find things in the Bible more easily.

Now, as a boss you are to treat your workers fairly, you are not to show partiality or favoritism because as a boss you have the Lord to answer to. And again, Paul is speaking to Christian bosses here; this doesn't work for those that are not Christians. And think about it, don't you want the Lord to treat you with fairness and justice? Of course you do and thus, treat your employee's the same. And the reality is, this should be true of every one of us, how we treat people!

As I close this evening, if we put off the old life and put on the new, put on Christ, then the nature of Jesus would flow from our lives because our minds and hearts are focused heavenward.

There would not be walls of division in the body of Christ because love would be flowing from us with all of its characteristics!

And in the family life, as you are focused on the Lord, as you are guided by love, there is harmony.

And this is also true at work.

Thus, whatever we do, may we do it unto the Lord, be it our words or our actions, allow Christ not only to shine in us but also through us touching those around us.

It is as Paul said as he opened up this chapter, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**IF THEN you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead], aim at and seek the [rich, eternal treasures] that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [Ps 110:1.] And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth. For [as far as this world is concerned] you have died, and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in [the splendor of His] glory.**” Colossians 3:1-4.

May we keep looking upward and seeking the Lord’s guidance in all that we do and say!