
Christ – Supreme & Sufficient *in daily living*

Colossians 3:1-4:6

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Introduction This month marks the 60th year of one of my dearest mentors in the faith. Ron Mahler, a Navigator rep., took me under his care back in 1984 in Hawaii and helped me to think and speak and live biblically. He showed me that my love for Jesus was to be lived out in daily living. If I can give him a birthday gift today it would be to multiply his efforts in my life by helping you to obey Christ in daily living.

The Lord brought Ron into my life at a time I most desperately needed him. I was only a few months old in the Lord. And I was in obvious need of discipleship. After Christ converted me in February of '84, some guys took me to their fellowship and attempted to teach me what spirituality was. They believed that the Lord's favor was on my life. They believed that I was going on in ministry to become an effective preacher and evangelist. There was but one thing missing in my life. It was power. Fullness of the Spirit they thought I lacked. After a Sunday service, the men took me into the back room to attempt to "fill me with the Spirit". At the end of this ministry I cried continually. I was not filled. They lost hope in me. And I was deeply confused.

This incident was not unlike what the Colossians faced. There were new teachers in their day who came with additions to the gospel. Fullness and freedom were not found in common Epaphras or his ordinary gospel. They could only be had through their ministry. The issue at hand was one of spirituality. For the false teachers, they believed that they had "super-spirituality" to offer. For Paul, he had biblical spirituality.

What my dear mentor gave me in '84 I want to give you in '06. What does biblical spirituality look like? What does it mean to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ? These are the types of questions that will be investigated as we give our attention to Colossians 3:1-4:6. Please open your Bibles to this passage.

Having an exposition of Christ (1:1-2:23) Paul now follows it with an explanation of what this all means in daily living. Christology is never divorced from human relationships. Paul will have none of this super spirituality. He applies the Majesty to the mundane. He shows what it means to live under Christ in daily living and normal relationships.

Christ – Supreme and Sufficient in daily living

3:1-4:6

Paul's basic agenda in the letter to the Colossians is seen in 1:28. "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ". Last week we noticed Christ's supremacy and sufficiency under attack. The new teachers were advocating a different gospel. This attack on the gospel concerned Paul greatly. He desired all the Colossians to mature. And to do this, Paul knew that "warnings" were in order. Therefore, last week we walked through three warnings and one application in order that all of us will eventually become mature.

This week in keeping with Paul's stated objective I will be "teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ". This teaching in 3:1-4:6 relates to daily living.

The basic teaching we will be confronted with this morning is what it means to live under the rule of Christ in daily living. In other words, what we will see is that *our relationship with our heavenly Lord MUST control all our earthly relationships.*

Today's aim is to explore how to serve the Lord Christ who is seated at the right hand of God. Paul's thought flows something like this.

Learning to serve the Lord Christ 1) as a believer (1-8), as a member of Clearcreek Chapel (9-17), at home (18-21), at work (22-4:2), among unbelievers (4:3-6).

As a believer

v.1-8

First we are to learn to serve the Lord Christ as a believer. This can be achieved by observing the four commands in vv.1-8. Listen for them as I read these vv.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Seek the things that are above

Learning to serve the Lord Christ as a believer requires obedience to His commands. The first one we see in this paragraph is "seek the things that are above".

The word "seek" is a strong verb urging everyone in the church at Colossae to look for, try to obtain, desire to possess. It corresponds to the affections. Paul starts his teaching on what it means to serve the Lord Christ not with a list of dos and don'ts. His exhortation lands squarely on the hearts of the believers. Everyone is to strongly desire to possess something. And what that something is Paul now addresses.

“The things that are above” is a phrase summarizing heavenly reality. He is telling the church that their affections must be oriented heavenward. But what is there in heaven that would compel and draw our hearts heavenward?

In v.1 Paul reaches back into the Psalter and alludes (if not outright quotes) Ps.110:1. In Ps.110, the Psalm most frequently quoted by the N.T. writers, we find King David speaking of the Master he serves. This master is seated at the right hand of God. This someone in the future who is “greater than David” (cf. Acts 2:34), who is greater than even the angels (cf. Heb.1:13) David falls down and worships. This Someone has been given all rule and authority in the universe. This someone is the Messiah who is pictured in this Psalm as going forth with unimaginable vitality in holiness and glory at the head of an army who will offer themselves in his service even if it costs them their lives (i.e. “living sacrifices”; see Jdgs. 5:18; Rom.12:1; Phil.2:17; Rev.12:11). This exalted One who will make His enemies into His footstool happens to be Jesus Christ. He is the one who is in heaven. This, then, becomes the fundamental reason for the exhortation to “seek the things above”.

Exhortation #1: Strongly desire to possess the heavenly King who is Christ Jesus our Lord.

Set your minds on things that are above

In order to learn to serve the Lord Christ as believers we not only are to strongly desire Him but in v.2 we see another exhortation. “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth”.

In this exhortation, it seems to me, Paul is focusing mainly on a “mind-set”. If v.1 references our passion v.2 then would point to our perspective. Here, he is commanding the members of the church at Colossae to “direct their attention to”, “to ponder much”, to think much on, “to be quite concerned about”.

And what are they to be thinking on much? “Things above; not things on earth”.

This command has occasioned some lively conversations in pastoral ministry. The objection goes something like this. “Oh, so the Bible tells us to be utterly heavenly minded. Well, if this is so, then that will make us of no earthly good. Should we not concern ourselves with maintaining the house and caring for the children and serving our spouse and showing up on time at work”?

Someone who would think and say things like these tell us that they do not want Jesus to be their heavenly King. The “earthly things” cannot refer to this type of interpretation. Otherwise, the rest of the passage and this message would make no sense at all.

The phrase “earthly things” as to do with two things. 1) In v.5, Paul tells us to put to death what is earthly in us. Here, the thought is sin. And so our minds are to be set not on sin but on our Savior. 2) The phrase also could be referring to what the false teachers of the day were advancing as seen in chapter two. I take it that Paul has both things in mind. He does not want the church to ponder sin and a legalistic system whereby a person would try to stop the indulgence of the flesh through human traditions and earthly ways.

Well then how are we to carry out these commands? We are remember that “you have died”. Believers are to believe that when Christ died they died too. What died? The old you, the you who hated God because He is king. The old you who desired to wear the crown and call the shots. The flesh has died. Flesh, the propensity to prefer self over Christ, has no authority. You have died!

And when Christ was raised they were raised too. When Christ ascended into heaven, they in a very real sense ascended too. Incorporation with Christ, union with Him, being IN HIM means that we have been transferred out of the old, earthly realm and have been placed into the new realm in which we now have the ability/desire/freedom to function in a Christ-like way.

Set your affections upon Christ and keep pondering the heavenly realities because you now can and because you now ought and because here is where your life really is.

Paul’s main emphasis is clear. Exhortation #2: Steadily set our thoughts on Christ and his ways; not on sin and the earthly ways.

Put to death what is earthly in you

Now, in v.5, Paul gives his third exhortation by providing a graphic term. “Kill what is earthly in you” is what he says. Don’t try to tame sin. Don’t try to manage sin. Don’t try to calm down sin. Don’t try to negotiate with or justify sin. As John Owen was known to say much, “Kill sin or sin will kill you”. This verse tells the church to mortify, to crush, to slit the throat of sin.

And what sin particularly does Paul have in mind? What follows is a descriptive; not exhaustive list. This list of five sins can be categorized as heart sins. These sins of passion, desire, lust are signs of false worship. They are summarized as idolatry. These are sins that will kill the relationships seen in vv.9-4:6. These are private sins that give rise to public atrocities.

What Paul tells the church to do must be obeyed by us. If we are to learn to serve the Lord Christ we must learn the art of killing...killing sin! If we do not keep killing sin in our imagination, the relationships in this chapter will be deeply damaged and v.6 will be a frightening prospect.

Put them all away

In vv.7-8, Paul shifts from heart sins to mouth sins. He says that when we were pagans we lived like this. But we mustn’t live anymore like we use to live. We **must** (there are no options here) put them all away. What is to be thrown away? Paul gives another list of five that describe a mouth that is not under the rule of Christ. Anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk are describing a mouth that has no interest in submitting to Christ nor has any interest in providing for and preserving the relationships we are about to read. This mouth, if it keeps up like this, will end in hell (see v.6).

“The mouth speaks from that which fills the heart” Jesus once said. Paul lists five heart sins and then follows it up with five mouth sins to illustrate what it takes to live under the rule of Christ. Learning to live under Jesus Christ as Lord requires

the believer to 1) whole-heartedly pursue Christ 2) single-mindedly ponder Christ 3) Aggressively kill sins in our thoughts 4) Actively clean up our speech.

This pursuit of holiness is essential to living under the Lordship of Christ. This pursuit of holiness will prepare us for relationships; in the church, at home, at work and in our neighborhoods. Let's begin looking at these relationships as expressions of living under the Lordship of Christ.

As a member of Clearcreek Chapel

v. 9-17

The first horizontal relationship we come across is the central and fundamental one. The local church is the realm in which the other relationships are to be shaped and steered.

Learning to live under the Lordship of Christ as a member of Clearcreek Chapel we must pay close attention to the five exhortations. Follow along as I read v.9-17

Do not lie to one another seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Do not lie to one another

What it means to live under the heavenly King is seen in the context of local church relationship. The first command to be obeyed is found in v.9. *Do not lie to one another.* To submit to Christ is to stop pretending to be someone we are not in front of our brothers and sisters at the Chapel. We are not to lie, to embellish, to exaggerate, to spread good rumors about us and bad rumors about others.

The reason for this command is that we have been born again. That's the meaning behind verses 9-10. We have been regenerated. We are the new creation; restored back into the image of our creator. Christ died for us not simply to give us passage to heaven but to re-create us in his own image so that both individually (v.1-8) and collectively (v.9-17) we may express the character, conduct and agenda of our King by the way we live and speak with each other.

And the way we live with each other is beautifully displayed in v.11. "Here", in this new society, this new civilization, we find no inferiority of one class to another. We all have a common interest. This interest is not in our professions nor is it found in our hobbies. This interest is not the Beagles and it is not the

Cardinals. Sharing a common allegiance to our heavenly King (Christ Jesus the Lord), regardless of color, class, or background.

In the new creation; namely the local church, there is to be no lying but rather living side by side in perfect harmony.

Put on

And this perfect harmony is enjoyed in the local church as each of us put on what we have already put on in v.10; namely the characteristics of the “new man” who is Jesus Christ.

The five virtues we come to in v.12 (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience) are given here to offset the five vices of v.5 and the five vices of v.8. As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, let us reflect the image of our creator; the Lord Christ. We are no longer in the old man. We are in the new man. We are no longer in the old order. We are in the new creation. We are in Christ Jesus the heavenly King. This is the local church. We put off the old and put on the new. We discard Adam and we don Christ. If there are complaints you have against each other resolve them. If sin has happened, confess and forsake it seeking forgiveness from the one you offended. If you have been sinned against forgive the one who comes to you asking for your mercy.

Beloved, learning to live under Christ requires a life lived for Christ. And that life is a life committed to the local church in order to express Christ to Christ’s people. We are to “put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony”. And that unity is what we find in v.15.

Let the peace of Christ rule

The next exhortation to obey so that we learn to live under Christ in the local church is found in v.15. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. This command has nothing to do with how to make decisions based on subjective impulse. This verse has everything to do with the unity we find in this paragraph. Flowing right out of v.15 we are commanded to live under the rule of Christ among each other. And that lifestyle is one of peace. We’ve been called into one body. There is not to be strife and contention among our relationships. Because of Christ’s rule (see v.1), we are to live in harmony with each other. Because of what God has done by making us into one body we are to be thankful.

I believe that the only way we will uphold such an agenda and lifestyle is if we obey the next command.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly

Verse 16 is the fuel for such a mission. “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly”. This gospel message centered on the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ is to permeate our lives. We are to listen and read and study and memorize and meditate on the gospel message of Jesus Christ. And as our minds are marinated in the Word we will go public with it by teaching one another and singing in ways that are profitable for God’s people and pleasing to God Himself. What a local church this is! Our whole being, being wholly influenced by His

Word, will preserve and promote the peace and unity of the congregation. Remember the false teaching of the day was threatening the unity of the congregation (cf. 2:2-5; 3:14). It is no different today. Truth unites. Error divides.

Do everything

Paul rounds out this section with an all-encompassing command. “Do everything” for the fame of our glorious Christ. The whole of life, both thought, word and deed, is to be submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ. No area of life stands outside his control. There is no distinction between sacred and secular. All of life is under the Lordship of Christ. Oh, how I yearn to preach on this verse. But we would be here all day. Beloved, memorize this verse. Allow it to measure every attitude and action you have. Keep the reputation of Christ as your ultimate aim. “Do everything for the sake of His name”. This everything will find itself right down in the nitty gritty of life. And it is to this environment that we now turn.

At home

v.18-21

V.18-21 is the next location in which we are to learn to live under Christ. This location is AT HOME. Picking up our reading of His precious truth follow along as I read vv.18-21.

Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Wives submit

The different roles and relationships at home are now talked about. First, we come to wives. With brevity, Paul says one thing to the wives. Submit to your husbands. When he is not requesting you to sin, gladly go with him. Learn to live well under Christ by learning to gladly follow your husband in all areas. And this “is fitting in the Lord”. This type of obedience is entirely proper and decent within the new fellowship of those who gladly are under Christ as Lord.

Ladies, your role here is good because Christ is great. Find your joy in Jesus by following your husbands gladly.

Husbands love your wives

Husbands, make it a joy for your wives to submit to you. Love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Learning to live under the rule of Christ means that we put away slow burning bitterness toward our wives that would give rise to harsh treatment of them. Rather, we gladly and sacrificially love and nurture and cherish them (cf. Eph.5). And all this due to Christ seated at the right hand of God.

Men, your role here is mandatory because Christ is Master. Find your joy in Jesus by leading your wives lovingly.

Children obey your parents

Children are you listening to this message? You are in this passage. Obey your parents not merely when you feel like it. Not when you think it will serve your

interests only. Obey in everything. When your dad tells you to take make your bed you gladly say, “Okay dad”. When your mom tells you to restudy your history you willingly say, “Okay mom”. Trust them and follow them. Obey them because this pleases Jesus. Think about the pleasure of Christ more than the pleasure of parents. You want to please...please Jesus in obedience to your parents.

Children, obey willingly your parents with an eye to pleasing Jesus Christ.

Fathers don't provoke

And in your parenting, fathers, help your children find their joy in obeying Christ. Don't hassle them in your discipline. Otherwise they may become discouraged. The goal is to rear the children in a way that they find obedience to Christ as both an unrivaled privilege and a unequaled pleasure.

Fathers, help don't hinder their walk with Christ.

At work

v.22-4.2

Leaving the location of home Paul now takes us to the work place seen in v.22-4:2.

Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Slaves obey in everything

Paul takes his teaching to the marketplace by first talking to the slaves. The first century slaves were to accept their station as slaves and to obey their earthly masters in everything. This obedience was not to be given grudgingly. It was to be sincere. Paul is not addressing the abolition of slavery. He is addressing ultimate freedom; the freedom of the heart. These slaves were to be so caught up in the realization that the Lord was real and really relevant. They were to be motivated for obedience not by their earthly masters but by their heavenly One. Pleasing the Lord Jesus was to be the fuel necessary to serve their earthly master. Their work was to be heartily done because of knowing who Jesus was and what He has in store for them. Jesus is easily pleased through obedience by faith.

Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly

Next, Paul looks to the earthly masters and has a word for them. They were to treat their slaves justly and fairly knowing that they too had a Master in heaven. In this first century setting, the slaves were to receive what they could not request. And the masters were to give what was not required. This teaching must have revolutionized their relationship (read the letter to Philemon).

Both alike, slaves and masters, had basically the same motivation for obedience. They both had a greater Master in heaven. Both owed obedience to that heavenly Lord. And thus their own relationships with each other were to be understood in light of this.

These two relationships transfer to us in the form of Employee/Employer. Employees, do I have your ear. In learning to live under Christ pay attention to how you work for your employer. Notice your attitude. Notice your work ethic. Receive repentance and renewed strength by seeking the things above where Christ is. And employers, do I have your ear? Do likewise. Learn to live under the Lordship of Jesus by paying attention to these exhortations. And do this with an eye to the sky. Keep your affections and attention upon the Lord Jesus – looking to Him for all you need by continuing steadfastly in prayer with an attitude of thanksgiving.

With unbelievers

v.4.3-6

Paul comes to a close in his teaching on living under Christ by shifting from relationships among believers to relationships among unbelievers. We see this shift as we pay attention to v.3-6

At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison – that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Pray for leaders

Paul starts his commands to the church for evangelism by exhorting them to pray for Paul and his team. This prayer was to ask God to open the door for the word that effective evangelism through their preaching would occur. Paul's request was not to have the door to his prison cell opened. His desire was for people to pray that his ministry wherever God had him would be successful.

Conduct yourselves

Secondly, in light of living under the rule of Christ, the church was not only to pray for leaders who preached the word they were to live and speak in such a way that outsiders would come to know Christ. The church was to live wisely and speak graciously. The difference between the speaking ministries of the leaders and the congregation can be seen in the last part of v.4 which says “how I (a preacher) ought to speak” and the last part of v.6 says “how you (the congregation) ought to answer”. The former is to declare. The latter is to discuss. The leaders are involved in proclamational evangelism. The congregation is to be involved in relational evangelism.

To help us close with this message here are seven lessons gleaned from this passage.

Lessons

1. Our earthly relationships are largely shaped by our heavenly relationship.
2. Our heavenly relationship requires all out effort.
3. Our relationship with Christ is in the context of the local church.
4. Our local church is to be characterized by perfect harmony and profound happiness.
5. Our homes are to be characterized the same.
6. Our workplaces are to be places of worship.
7. Our neighborhoods are to be reached for Christ.