

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Small Group Bible Study

Paul's Letter to the Colossians (Part III)

SERIES INTRODUCTION

In part III of our study of Paul's letter to the Colossians, we look at the implications of Christ and his Gospel in four major relationships of life: Family, Personal, Public, and [ministry] Partners.

Paul shows us that belief and behavior are intimately connected. A Christian ought to conduct himself in a manner fitting of the word of Christ. A Christ-centred living that finds confidence and sufficiency in Him will enable a believer to conduct himself in a God-fearing manner – lovingly, fairly, wisely, and graciously.

Christ is all, and in all (3:11). But do we live with Him as Lord (2:6)? What is God showing you about your conduct in those four relationships? What changes must take place if you truly submit to Christ's lordship?

7 Sep

Guidelines for Christian Families

Colossians 3:15 – 4:1

14 Sep

Praying and Proclaiming

Colossians 4:2-6

21 Sep

Partners In the Gospel

Colossians 4:7-18

Guidelines for Christian Families

COLOSSIANS 3:15 - 4:1

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

Having established the supremacy of Christ (Colossians 1) and explaining what it means for the Colossian Christians to be spiritually alive in Christ (Colossians 2), Paul gets down to the “business end” of things in Colossians 3, i.e. what the Colossian Christians are called to do and to be. After talking about what they need to “put off” and “put on” in their personal lives, he traces the “rules” for Christian households and the workplace where Christians invariably spend a lot of their time in. This passage is about application. If we follow Paul’s instructions, we can be sure that we are on the right track.

For Study and Discussion

1. Let the peace of Christ rule ... (3:15-17)
 - a. According to this passage, name the two “places” where the peace of Christ is supposed to be found and to prevail?

 - b. Why is there often no such “peace” in our lives?

 - c. What is the “word of Christ”? How do we let it dwell richly in our lives? (v16)

 - d. What does verse 17 really look like in our daily life? Share examples and experiences from your own life.

2. Guidelines for Christian Families (3:18-21)
 - a. Read verses 18-21 with Ephesians 5:21-6:4. Describe the responsibilities of:
 - i. a husband and a wife towards each other
 - ii. a wife towards her husband
 - iii. a husband towards his wife
 - iv. a child towards his/her parents
 - v. a parent towards his/her child

- b. How are the above guidelines (one may even call them “commands”) concerning Christian family relationships different from what the world may practise?

 - c. How should a husband love his wife? What is the “standard”?

 - b. What are some ways in which parents “embitter” or “exasperate” their children?
3. Employment Guidelines (3:22-4:1)
Read Colossians 3:22-4:1 with Ephesians 6:5-9.
- a. How should we act towards our employer? What would motivate us (positively or negatively) to act like that?

 - b. How should we treat those under our authority? What incentive is there for us to do this?

 - c. How can we influence our workplace for Christ? Think of some practical steps to take. Let this be a prayer item for your group.

Discipleship Pointers:

Let the rule of Christ and his Gospel be the house-rule of our families and workplaces

- Paul urges the Colossians to let Christ’s peace rule in their hearts, the Word to dwell in their lives and for thankfulness to be their attitude at all times.
- Paul sets out some plain rules for Christian households and to guide Christians at their workplace. We will do well to follow such rules.

Family/Group Moment

- Discuss the “family rules” in verses 18-21. Allow every member of the family to have his/her say on whether such rules are ever followed in your family.
- Parents – set the example and ask for forgiveness if you have fallen foul of any of the rules, e.g. husband being harsh on wife; father having exasperated children, etc.
- Make sure you finish your discussion with prayer for the family and as a family. Humbly ask God to help you to abide by these biblical rules. They are meant for your well-being.

Praying and Proclaiming

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

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Our calling in Christ and his Gospel must also show forth its characteristic in our life of prayer and witness. Paul's exhortations in these sections are not cursory, but are part and parcel of bringing a believer's personal and public life under Christ's rule. Christ must have the supremacy over every aspect of a believer's life (1:18); "Christ is all and is in all" (3:11). How do we impact and shape our society and community has a lot to do with the simple and clear exhortations in this passage.

For Study and Discussion

1. Conduct In the Prayer Closet (4:2-4)
Paul exhorts the believers to be devoted to prayer.
 - a. What are some causes of prayerlessness? Conversely, what situations often drive people to pray?

 - b. Why is prayerlessness dangerous? What sin can it lead to? Consider 1 Samuel 12:19-25; Mark 14:38; 1 Thessalonians 3:17.

 - c. Paul instructs the believers to pray with two attitudes. What are they? Why are they important? (v2; cf. Ephesians 6:18; 1 Peter 5:8)

 - d. Paul asks the believers to pray specifically in two areas (vv3-4). What are they?
 - i. Read Acts 10:9-48. What is the relationship between missions/evangelism and prayer?

 - ii. Read Ephesians 6:19-20. What is the relationship between proclamation and prayer?

2. Conduct In the Public Space (4:5-6)
Paul cautions the believers to conduct themselves wisely toward outsiders.
 - a. With reference to the Christian community, who are the "outsiders"?

 - b. Discuss what 'wise conduct' looks like in each of the following cases. What are the biblical principles that should guide our conduct?
 - i. 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 – to eat or not to eat?

- iii. 1 Peter 2:11-12 – Living as aliens amongst pagans
- iv. 1 Peter 3:13-16 – Suffering for doing good
- c. Besides conduct, Paul also draws attention to speech. How should believers engage outsiders in speech?
- d. Read Proverbs 25:11-15; 26:4-5. How do these passages underscore the value of speaking wisely? Do you speak in the same manner?

Discipleship Pointers

A prayerful heart combined with godly conduct and wise words go a great distance to witness to unbelievers the mystery of Christ.

- Prayerlessness is a sin. A Christian who does not pray cannot discern the will of God and can be easily tempted to sin in other ways.
- Being prayerful connect us to God. It is God who teaches us through the Holy Spirit concerning what to say and how to say it clearly and boldly in a witnessing context.
- A believer's conduct opens or closes door to effective proclamation of the Gospel. Beware of your words and actions. Speak words that heal, rather than words that hurt. Do deeds that built up others, rather than deeds that destroy relationships.

Family/Group Moment

- When do you pray? How can you pray more purposefully?
- What do you pray about most? Pray for divine appointment that will allow you to share the Gospel boldly.
- When you speak, when are your words most helpful? When are your words most hurtful?
- When you act, when are your actions most constructive? When are your actions most stumbling?
- Remember that the way you speak and act amongst believers will be the same with outsiders/unbelievers. Resolve to be salt and light for Jesus in our words and actions.

Partners in the Gospel

COLOSSIANS 4:7-18

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Paul finishes his letter with some greetings and introductions.

TimeLine

During this study, we will be looking at some of Paul's other letters. The order of these letters is as follows:

- Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon were written together during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome and most likely brought to Asia Minor together by Tychicus and Onesimus
- After he was freed, Paul was at Nicopolis when he wrote Titus
- Paul was rearrested and was back in Rome when he wrote 2 Timothy just before his execution.

For Study and Discussion

1. Tychicus (4:7)
 - a. Where is Tychicus from? (Acts 20:4) (Note: Both Ephesus and Colosse were found in this province)
 - b. How does Paul describe Tychicus and his role? (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; Titus 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:12)
 - c. What was Tychicus to do in Ephesus and Colosse? (Eph 6:21, Col 4:7-8)

Note: Tychicus was with Paul for much of the time from the start of Paul's journey to Jerusalem in Acts 20 until he was sent to Ephesus by Paul just before 2 Timothy was written.

2. Onesimus (4:9; Philemon 10-18)
 - a. What was Onesimus relationship to Philemon?
 - b. What had Onesimus become to Paul?
 - c. Why was Onesimus sent back to Philemon? What was Paul's plea to Philemon?

Paul was giving up someone he wanted to keep (Phlm 13) because he did not want to force Philemon to do something without his consent – Paul could have ordered Philemon to do what he should do but he did not (Phlm 8). Paul could have force Onesimus to go back to Philemon. Yet Onesimus obeyed Paul and did what Paul instructed him despite the risks.

What does that tell us about how we should use/respond to authority in the church?

3. Epaphras (1:7-8; 4:12-13)
 - a. Who is Epaphras?

b. What was he always doing on behalf of his home church? How about us – are we doing the same?

4. Paul's fellow Jews (4:10-11)

a. What did Paul get from his fellow Jewish workers?

b. Paul is far away from home – having fellow believers with him was a great help. Do we encourage our fellow workers/missionaries who are far away – by letters, emails, visits?

5. Mark (4:10)

a. Mark did not have a good start with Paul. What happened? (Acts 15:37-39)

b. Yet, what was Mark now to Paul? How was the Colossians to treat him? See also 2 Timothy 4:11.

A person can change for the good. Mark was such a person. Paul was willing to acknowledge this and accept him back as a fellow worker. Are we willing to accept back a person who failed us in the past?

6. Demas (4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:10)

a. Who was Demas?

b. What happen during Paul's second imprisonment? Why?

People can change for the worse. Demas was such a person. He is a warning for us – just because somebody is in the ministry or in our team does not mean that he cannot fall and in the process cause us much trouble.

7. Luke (4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11) – the writer of the Gospel of Luke and Acts

a. How does Paul describe Luke?

b. Unlike Demas – where was Luke at the end of Paul's life? (2 Tim 4:11)

8. Archippus (4:17, Philemon 2)

a. Who is Archippus?

b. What did Paul tell him to do?

It seems that Archippus was delaying in finishing some work that he was supposed to do. So Paul was encouraging him to do it. Remember that this letter is a public letter that will be read out to the church where Archippus was a leader of. Sometimes we need to be public in our encouragement to those who are slacking off.

Discipleship Pointers

Paul had a team of people whom he worked with for the sake of the Gospel. Some were with him for years, others were sent out to be his representatives at some particular locations. Some came to him as representatives of some churches to help minister to him. There were further others who were converted by him and join his team.

They all worked together under the leadership of Paul to get the Gospel out to the world – they were Partners in the Gospel.

Let us all be willing to do our part in reaching the world for Christ. Are we willing to get involved? What is our part? Do we know?