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Living in the Life of the Lord (Colossians 3:1—4:6)

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AS CHRISTIANS center and surround themselves in the life of Jesus, His nature and life enables them to put off such things as anger and impurity and to put on the kind of spirit that makes for successful relationships.

Genuine conversion to Christ results in a new rule (1:13), new relationships (1:22), new thoughts (3:1-4), and new actions (3:5—4:6). This new life grows into a reservoir of spiritual power out of which we spiritually discern and discover the power to order our priorities before the Lord.

But what about the everyday struggles of Christian character and life? Two elements of growth are implied in Colossians: First is the Christian's desire, will, and initiative. "Put off" and "put on" imply a conscious desire and decision to initiate changes in our lives. One can willfully reject the way of Christ or willfully yield to His life. Christians are to yield, walk, and respond in trustful submission and rugged reliance upon Jesus' way. Second is the Christian's sphere of life and relationship with Christ. This becomes the reservoir out of which the Christian's will operates. Christians are to be rooted in Him, be built up in Him, find fullness of life in Him, have been buried with Him, have been raised with Him, have been made alive with Him, triumph in Him, hold fast to Him, seek Him, be hid in Him, live in Him, be renewed in Him, be ruled by Him, be indwelt by Him, do everything in His name, do all things as unto Him, and serve Him. (See this drift in 2:6—4:6.)

Galatians 5:16-26 is an illustration of this dual dynamic. We must choose the Spirit's walk (5:16, 21). When we choose that walk and His

will, the Spirit produces fruit. We begin to develop the mind and outlook of the Spirit. As situations arise, we respond to them out of our walk with the Spirit. So it is with Christ in Colossians (cf. 3:10). Paul applied this principle with examples in Colossians 3 and 4.

IMPURITY AND PASSION (3:5)

The new outlook toward our relation to people springs from Jesus' own outlook. The harlot whom Jesus met (Luke 7:36-50) was despised and rejected by some. Others used and abused her. But Jesus did neither. He treated her with respect, dignity, and love. He cared about her as a person. The last thing He would have done to her was to hurt her. She needed something that only God's man could give. Jesus would respond to her out of the heart of God. We, as Christians, do not become moral out of smug self-righteousness. We become moral out of a relationship with God and because we are becoming like Him in our way of looking at other people.

ANXIETY AND WORRY (3:15)

Why does anxiety sometimes control us? We look to and pursue the wrong things (3:5ff.) and lack confidence in Christ (1:15-20). In Jesus we see something that changes our perspective. We see His love. He laid it all down for our every need by giving His life (Romans 8:31ff.). We see His promise (2:9-15; 3:15) and His purpose (1:22, 27, 28; 3:4). We also see His life—His own trustful walk with the Father. We then begin to respond to life situations and problems much as Jesus would.

ANGER AND BITTERNESS (3:8)

Life sometimes hands us bitter blows. How do Christians deal with them? We can look at Jesus as described in Isaiah 53 and look at Him on the cross (1 Peter 2:21-25). We are changed as we begin to develop His perspective and become like Him.

MARRIAGE (3:18, 19)

In 3:18, 19, wives are told, "Be subject." This can be learned from Jesus. The spirit of Jesus is shown as He submitted Himself (Philippians 1:5-11). This is to be as the church is subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Husbands are told, "Love your wives." This is also learned from Jesus. Jesus laid down His life for the church (Ephesians 5:25). He seeks the church's best interest (Ephesians 5:26, 27) and nourishes and cherishes the church (Ephesians 5:29, 30).

DEALING WITH OUTSIDERS (4:5, 6)

Nobody better fulfilled 4:5, 6 than Jesus. From Him we can learn new perspectives and insights about people and how to love them and relate to them (John 4: 9).

CONCLUSION

These and other changes are made in our lives, not out of a kind of moralistic humanism, but out of our look to Jesus and life in Him. Our roots should run deep (3:7); we should live in the life of the Lord (3:3). He can transform us as we behold Him (2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:1, 2). If we take our eyes off Him, we will become barren and unfruitful (2 Peter 1:8, 9). Let us be renewed daily after His image (3:10). We can know fullness of life in Him (2:9, 10).

Epaphras had worked among these Christians as a dear brother in the faith. He labored, and prayed for them. His deepest longing was that they might "stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God." Toward this end Paul wrote this letter. It was his prescription for spiritual growth. In short, that prescription was and is the Christ—the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of all things. He is the focal point of history, the fullness of God in bodily form. He can change your life, secure your future, and glorify you eternally. Do not take your eyes off Him!

QUOTATIONS

"Conceit is what makes a little squirt think he's a big fountain of knowledge."

"Don't forget that people will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold—but so does a hard-boiled egg."

"Most failures are experts in making excuses."

"It's easy to be an angel when nobody ruffles your feathers."

"Never pick a quarrel even when it's ripe."

"Perhaps the only way to avoid quarreling with your wife is to let her go her way and you go hers."

"Habits are at first cobwebs, then cables."

"Every person lives in one of two 'tents'—either content or discontent."

"To really know a man, observe his behavior with a woman, a flat tire, and a child."

"What is charity? It is silence when your words would hurt. It is patience when your neighbor's curt. It is deafness when a scandal flows. It is thoughtfulness for others' woes. It is promptness when stern duty calls. It is courage when misfortune falls."

"You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was."

"It is better to say, 'This one thing I do' than to say, 'These forty things I dabble in.'"

"The world seeks victory by trying to get back on its feet, the Christian by getting down on his knees."

"Did you hear about the man who said, 'I'm stubborn only when I don't get my own way?'"