

Colossians 3:15-19 "Since You Have Been Raised with Christ, Love Your Wife" Sept 4, 2022
Zephaniah 3
Psalm 46A

Zephaniah 3 describes the same basic problem that Paul does in Colossians 3.

Paul says in Colossians 3:5-6 –

“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.”

Zephaniah prophesied during the days of Josiah –
one of the best kings in all of Judah’s history!

Josiah was faithful to the LORD!

Josiah led all sorts of reforms – and he trusted fully in the LORD his God.

We’ve been seeing in the evening service the importance of a King from Bethlehem –
a king who will do what is right in God’s eyes –
and who will lead *us* to do what is right in God’s eyes!!

Josiah is arguably *better than David!*

And yet Zephaniah prophesies destruction.

Why?

Reforming kings cannot save you.

Sure – Josiah will make sure that Yahweh worship happens in Jerusalem!

But can a mortal, human king bring about *righteousness*?

“Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city!

She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction.

She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God.”

Josiah cannot change the hearts of God’s people.

The LORD points out that he has cut nations off –

a century before, he had laid waste Samaria – the northern kingdom of Israel –

but did Jerusalem accept correction?

No.

And so God says that he will cut off the proud and haughty.

And he will change the speech of the peoples –

he will bring salvation to the Gentiles!
And he will leave in your midst “a people humble and lowly.”

And so Zephaniah tells daughter Zion to “Sing aloud – rejoice and exult with all your heart”
because the LORD has taken away the judgments against you –
(what Paul said in Colossians 2:13-14 – God forgave us all our sins –
by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us)

How could God take away the judgments against us?
By sending his own Son – to take the judgment upon himself!
In Christ, the whole fulness of deity dwelt bodily.
Only one who was fully God and fully man could fully bear that judgment!
It had to be a man – because only a man could pay for man’s error!
But it had to be God – because only God could bear the weight of God’s wrath!

But when the King of Israel – the LORD himself – comes in your midst –
“the mighty one *who will save!*”
then, Zephaniah says, “he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.” (v17)

That’s Jesus!
Jesus rejoices over *you* –
Jesus quiets you by his love –
Jesus exults over *you* with loud singing!

This is what Jesus has done – and is doing! –
and therefore we can respond by singing Psalm 46 –
“come, behold the works of the LORD”

Sing Psalm 46A
Read Colossians 3:1-19

Introduction: The Indicative and the Imperative

Paul’s letter to the Colossians can be summed up in four questions:

Who is Jesus Christ?
What has he done?
Who are you *in Christ*?
And what does that mean for your life?

Last time, we left off in the middle of verse 15,
as Paul is describing five imperatives of the Christian life.

You can see these five imperatives in verses 12-17 –

“Put on...” the qualities of Christ (verses 12-14)
“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (v15a)
“Be thankful” (v15b)
“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (v16)
“and do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v17)

We’ll be exploring these five imperatives over the next few weeks,
because what Paul does at the end of chapter 3
is apply these five imperatives to our everyday relationships
as husbands and wives,
parents and children,
masters and slaves.

The commands – the imperatives – of the Christian life
are rooted in the indicative – the statement of who you are in Christ.

1. Who You *Are* in Christ (v1-11)

We are to become more and more of what we already are *in Christ*.

2. Therefore *Be* Who You Are in Christ (v12-17)

Since we didn’t look at the last three imperatives last time –
I want to take a moment to explain them up front:

Verse 15 ends:
And be thankful.

This third imperative is short and to the point:
Be thankful.

Are you characterized by gratitude?
First – of course – gratitude to God!
Be thankful that he has delivered you from the domain of darkness!

If you see God for who he is –
and if you see your own sin clearly for what it is –
then you will marvel at the kindness and mercy of God
in Jesus Christ!

As long as you think that you are pretty okay –
then you will be an ungrateful person.

As long as you think that you deserve better –
then you will *not* be thankful!

But Paul says – “be thankful!”

This command will run through the following two commands as well.

Indeed, the last two commands could be taken as an exposition of this one!

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly (v16)

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Since the Word of Christ has renewed you into the image of Christ,
let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,
teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

How does the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom?
We need to *know* the Word – not just facts about the Word –
but the Word should *dwell* in us.
Do you want your life to be transformed by the gospel?
then allow the gospel to reshape you!

What word dwells in you?
It's not a matter of going through the motions.
It's about rooting your whole life in the Word of God.
Most people find that starting their day in the Word and prayer
is very helpful for orienting your daily life towards the Lord.
But Paul is not saying, "let the Word of Christ have a few minutes of your time"
He is saying, "let the Word of Christ LIVE in you!"
God's Word should permeate every aspect of your life.

The result of Christ's Word dwelling richly in us
should be that we teach and admonish one another in song!

Paul says to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs."
These terms do not refer to three different types of songs,
rather they are three different words for songs,
In the Greek translation of the Psalms,
these three words are used to refer to various psalms.

True Christian piety is rooted in the Word of God,
therefore we should sing God's Word to each other.
We can do this either through singing the Psalms or other biblical passages,
or through singing paraphrases and summaries of biblical teaching.

But notice – Paul doesn't say "do this at church."
No – Paul's not talking about the worship service here!
Paul is talking about daily life!

Wait a second, pastor!

Are you saying that life should be like a musical –
where everyone is singing to each other?!

No.
I'm not.

Paul is.

And Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ –
and he puts this as one of his basic imperatives of the Christian life.

Why are we so feeble in our Christian walk?

Well, we're not singing much to each other – are we?
If the Word of Christ dwells in us richly –
then we would overflow in song!

Now – in fairness – singing in the ancient world would sound to us more like chanting.
Paul is not expecting everyone to be an amazing singer!
But he is expecting that your knowledge of the scriptures would overflow into your life!

We teach and admonish each other, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.
Perhaps you don't have a very good voice.

That's okay.

God doesn't care how it sounds,
but he delights to hear us sing to one another!
And as we do, the Word of Christ will continually reshape us into his image.

Since Christ is all and is in all, DO all in his name, with a thankful heart! (v17)

17 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.

Christ is the center.

Everything in your life should revolve around him.

When you speak, it is in his name!

When you act, it is for his glory.

But PLEASE do not get legalistic about this!

This is not done out of guilt,
or out of some sense that YOU can please God in your own efforts!

NO!

You do all things out of gratitude for what Christ has done for you!

Because YOU ARE IN CHRIST

Because You Have Died with HIM,

and been raised to the right hand of the Father in HIM,
therefore all your life is to be centered in him.

So,
because this is who you are in Christ,
take off your dirty clothes,
take off your filthy, sinful rags,
and put on Christ.

And then – in spite of every translation’s attempt to convince you that Paul is changing topics,
Paul continues his theme and applies it to marriage, family, and business relationships.

What does it look like to live this way?

3. **Wives, Submit to Your Husbands (v18)**
4. **Husbands, Love Your Wives (v19)**

Since you've been raised with Christ,
and are a new man in him,
this should affect everything you do.

Think about that “same old fight” that you have with your spouse *all the time*.
One of you thinks that every dish should go in the dishwasher right away.
The other one thinks that it’s no big deal.

It might seem like a trivial matter.
And – okay – yes, it is a trivial matter!

But how do you show compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience?
If you do not show kindness in trivial matters,
then you are not showing kindness.
If you do not love in trivial matters,
then you are not loving!

You see, when Paul says for wives to submit to their husbands “as it fitting in the Lord” –
he is saying that the wife needs to show kindness and humility to her husband.
And when Paul says that husbands must love your wives and do not be harsh with them –
he is saying that the husband needs to show kindness and humility to his wife.

In a Christian marriage, the husband loves his wife so thoroughly –
with such meekness and patience –
that her submission is a joy.

In a Christian marriage, the wife submits to her husband so completely –
with such compassion and kindness –
that his love is also a joy.

Oh – but wait – I left out verse 13...

“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.”

So – in a Christian marriage – we also have to deal openly and honestly with *sin*.
When I fail to love my wife – I need to repent.
When she fails to submit to me – I need to forgive.

If I hold it against her?

That’s the very harshness – or bitterness – that Paul forbids in verse 19.

So let’s walk back through chapter 3 – using the lens of marriage:
Since you have died and been raised with Christ,
wife, submit to your husband –
husband, love your wife.

Verses 18 and 19 are simply one extension,
one application of the rest of the chapter.

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

The word *upotassesthe* can either be translated, "submit yourself"
or, "be submissive".

In other words, Paul is saying, "wives, submit to your husbands..."
NOT, "husbands, make your wives submit."

Wives, you are to submit to your husband,
as is fitting in the Lord,
but remember that last phrase,
as is fitting in the Lord!

The reason why you are to submit to him is not because he is such a wonderful guy
--it is not because he deserves it.

You know very well,
that sometimes your husband does not deserve anything from you!

The reason why you are to submit, is not because HE deserves it,
but because our Lord Jesus Christ deserves it.

It is because you have died,
and your life is now hidden with Christ in God,
that you are to set your heart and mind on things above,
and will put to death the things that belong to the flesh – that old way of life –
and out of your gratitude toward God,
you can submit to your husband, in the name of the Lord Jesus,

giving thanks to God the Father through him.

You see, fellows, in yourself, you don't deserve her submission,
and so you have no right to demand it from her.

Paul could have discussed marriage as a creation ordinance.
He could have said,

"God has so ordered things that you wives must submit to your husbands,
because God has placed them over you."

But he didn't.

Paul points us to Christ, and how our union with Christ should affect our marriages.

Colossians three is a sermon about how our union with Christ
transforms us in our relationships with others.

The selfish practices which characterized our earthly nature are to be put to death
--not simply because they hurt other people--
but because they are fundamentally inconsistent with who YOU are in Christ.

You cannot demand that she submit to you,
because if you do, you are becoming harsh and bitter toward her,
and that is exactly what Paul forbids in verse 19.

What does it look to be bitter or harsh toward someone?

You probably all know someone who you would consider bitter.

How do they relate to you?

They may criticize you behind your back,
or undermine the project for which you had worked so hard to build consensus.

Perhaps you know someone who is always dissatisfied with you,
or pesters you constantly about some trivial issue.

Or is it someone who is always harping on your weaknesses,
and knows how to get your goat when you're down.

What do all these "bitter" people have in common?

Is it not that they are trying to control people--
to force others to submit to their agenda?

And when they fail, they hold a grudge,
and their hearts become hard and alienated from you or others.

But husbands, don't you find this same attitude creeping into your heart toward your wife?

Don't you find yourself constantly seeking to have your own way?

And isn't it tempting to remind your wife that she's supposed to submit to you?

Hey, you've got an ace up your sleeve

--you can always point her to Colossians 3, or Ephesians 5 . . . !

Paul is saying DON'T DO IT!!!

Since you have been raised with Christ,
love your wife.

Since you have died with Christ, and your life is now hidden with him in God,
you are NOT to become bitter toward her.

Your desire to have your way all the time

is nothing but the very greed,

anger,

and yes, the bitterness,

which Paul commands you to put to death.

All those petty little disagreements that you have?

What's going on there?

I like how one author says it:

“I was arguing about the merits of a glass by the sink. But for my wife, it wasn't about the glass. It wasn't about dishes by the sink, or laundry on the floor...

It was about consideration. About the pervasive sense that she was married to someone who did not respect or appreciate her. And if I didn't respect or appreciate her, then I didn't love her in a manner that felt trustworthy. She couldn't count on the adult who had promised to love her forever, because none of this dish-by-the-sink business felt anything like being loved. I now understand that when I left that glass there...it felt to her as if I had just said, “Hey. I don't respect you or value your thoughts and opinions. Not taking four seconds to put my glass in the dishwasher is more important to me than you are.”

Suddenly, this moment is no longer about something as...meaningless as a dirty glass. Now this moment is about a meaningful act of love and sacrifice.” [Matthew Fray in the Atlantic]

Headship and submission is not particularly about decision making,

but about spiritual leadership and reflecting Christ's love for his church.

This shouldn't surprise us

--that's exactly what Paul is saying here.

So while you are not to make your wife submit to you,

you are commanded to make it easy for her to submit to you.

How?

By loving her.

Now, this is one of the most difficult commands in Scripture.

In Matthew 19, when Jesus' disciples heard his teaching on the permanence of marriage,
and the sinfulness of divorce,

they exclaimed:

"If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry!"
But here, Paul is upping the ante--
not only must a man live with his wife for the rest of his life,
he has to love his wife for the rest of his life!

What is it that can sustain your love for your wife?
IS THERE ANYTHING IN YOUR WIFE that could sustain your love for her
in those times when she is being flatly unloveable?
in those times when she is being unreasonable,
selfish,
and insensitive to your needs,
your hopes,
and your desires?

The reason why you are going to love your wife,
as he says in verse four,
is because Christ is your life.

The heart of the gospel is that Jesus Christ has died for our sins,
that he has been raised from the dead, so that we might have life;
and has ascended to the Father, so that we might receive the Holy Spirit!

But here, in Colossians, Paul tells you that those who have put their hope and trust in Jesus
have also died,
have also been raised,
and are NOW in Jesus Christ at the right hand of God.

Verses 1-4 say [read]

Your life is now,
even NOW,
hidden with Christ in God.

That is the reality for every believer in Jesus Christ.
You are no longer what you once were.

You are NO LONGER the old,
selfish,
arrogant,
lying,
greedy,
angry,
lustful,
inconsiderate,
impatient,
unkind sinner that you used to be.

HE DIED, and your life is now hidden with Christ.
THEREFORE, Paul says in verse 5,
put to death whatever belongs to that old self
and in verse 8

rid yourself of all such things as these!
That's not you any more, so don't live like it is!
 Every time you sin
 you are denying who you are
 Every time you let sin master you,
 you are denying the Master who bought you.
If you are in Christ, then you have put on the new self.

If you are united to Christ, and his life has become yours,
 then the reason why you love your wife is because of your gratitude to God,
 for the great salvation which is yours in Jesus!
You have the guarantee that "When Christ, who is your life, appears,
 then you also will appear with him in glory."
THAT is the foundation and the motivation for your love.
This gratitude,
 this joy welling up in your heart,
 is to overflow into everything you do.
That's what Paul says in verse 17! [read]

And then,
 despite the fact that every edition,
 translation,
 and paraphrase
 breaks the paragraph and starts some new section on "Social Duties"
--Paul continues his thought,
 and tells you the first thing that you are to do in the name of the Lord Jesus:
 wives, submit to your husbands,
 and husbands, love your wives.
That's how important marriage is--it's the first thing Paul thought of
 when he thought about what it means to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

What does it mean to *love* your wife?
 [READ v12]

These are not merely passive attributes--
 my father has always been a very gentle and patient man,
 but also rather passive.
Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience must be active!
 You cannot wait for your wife to tell you what is wrong,
 you must find out.
 You must take the initiative to learn about the inner workings of her heart,
 --you must become a student of your wife--
 and when you have hurt her,
 you must take the lead, and ask for her forgiveness.

In tears my father has told me how he never knew how to communicate to my mother,
and worse,

he never even realized that he was failing to communicate.

He never noticed that she was wilting before his very eyes.

Your kindness needs to open all those locked doors in her mind,
and gently wipe away all her tears.

Your compassion must reach into your wife's heart,
and heal her loneliness and fear.

Your humility must bow the knee FIRST
and seek to honor her and exalt her--
even as Christ has done for us--*his* bride.

You must care for her and give your life to her--
but you cannot stop there--

Rather, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ,
you must give your life for her;
sacrificing yourself,
your desires,
and your comfortability
for your bride.

In this way you will show forth the love of Christ for his church
in a way that no sermon can equal,
no other picture can compare to.

Your love for her will demonstrate the great and profound mystery
of the union of Christ with his people--
as you tenderly nourish and sustain her,
showering upon her the grace and the love
which God has showered upon you.

And as you give yourself to her,
allowing your hopes,
your desires--
your life--
to merge with hers until they are as truly united as you are with Christ,
then you will find the strength to bear with her,
even when she's being unreasonable,
and the ability to be patient,
even when she's being a grouch.

All this is love.

Paul says in verse 14, [read]

It is this love which God calls you to.

It is this love which you are to bestow upon your wife.

NOT because she deserves it,
but because Christ deserves it.

If you ever get to the point where you give your spouse what he or she deserves,
then you have turned that person into an idol.

You are expecting them to be perfect.

Marriage is not about getting what you deserve--that's LAW.

Marriage is about giving something that is undeserved--

Marriage is about Grace.

It is about portraying the love of God for his people

Don't forget,

the reason why you love your wife,

is NOT because she is such a loveable person.

It is because God has loved you and forgiven you!

He has removed your sin and united you to his Son.

It is he who is at work in you both to will and to do,

as Paul says in Philippians 2:13,

and it is his Spirit who is sustaining you

and sanctifying you daily by the power of Christ's atoning blood shed on the cross.

How do you show love for your wife?

Give yourself to her.

At every moment be kind,

gentle,

patient,

humble,

forgiving--

all these are bound up in perfect unity by love.

Without them there is no love.

You can provide everything in the world for her,

but without these things,

you ARE NOT LOVING HER.

This is your greatest task.

This is your highest calling before God.

If you fail in this,

you will undermine everything else you do,

because THIS is the ultimate test of your union with Christ.

If you are united to Christ,

and he has become your life,

then your love for your wife will demonstrate to the world

that Jesus has united a people to himself.

your gentleness with her will show to this congregation

the tender care with which our Lord sustains us.

and your patience with her will model for your children

God's inimitable forbearance with his people.

God has given you the privilege and the honor of reflecting his rule and stewardship

in your relationship with this woman.

If you take any other example than Christ
you will miserably fail.
If you look to any other for strength and wisdom,
you will become weak and foolish.

But, if you rely upon the one who "gave himself up for his church,
to make her holy,
cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,
to present her to himself as a radiant church,
without stain or wrinkle,"
and if you trust in him,
first for your salvation,
but also for the grace to love your wife in the same way that he loves you,
then when Christ, who is your life, appears,
you also will appear with him in his glory.

Conclusion:

If someone asked me, "How much does Christ love the church?"
Could I point to you?
Could I say, "look at how he loves his wife"?
But wives, don't start elbowing your husbands yet!
If someone asked me, "How does the church submit to Christ?"
Could I point to you?
Could I say, "look at how she submits to her husband"?
As I was preparing this sermon, I stopped and realized that in this light,
the disciples response to Jesus is pretty understandable!
If this is the situation between a husband and a wife, you've gotta be nuts to get married!

That is where we are once again drawn back to the cross.
YOU HAVE NO HOPE OF EVER LOVING YOUR WIFE
if you do not fix your heart and mind on the grace of God found in Jesus Christ alone

That is why Jesus is calling you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him.
That call led you to Calvary, where you died with Christ.
But you don't merely follow him to the grave,
You follow him to the resurrection,
where you were raised with Christ,
and your life is now hidden with him
at the right hand of the Father.

Since then, you have been raised with Christ,
love your wife,
and give yourself for her,
as Christ has given himself for you.