

Colossians 4:7-18

Recap & Salutations

The last time I got to share with you was on December 31st, and I'm sure you all remember what we talked about, right? What the Lord has laid on my heart for that Sunday is the call for our church to focus our eyes, and more importantly, to practice Christlikeness.

How are you doing with that? Do you see the Lord shaping you as a potter shapes a vessel? Are you remaining open and malleable to His handiwork? How have these four and a half months of 2024 been for you?

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB): *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."*

- Work through the text commenting on the dynamics. **Colossians 4:7-18**

Premise for the morning:

Last Easter Pastor Kyle mentioned Isaiah 1:18, it is the beginning of that verse that really got my attention:

Isaiah 1:18 (NASB) *"Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the Lord, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.'" (1 John 9 wash of confession)*

In the preceding verses, the Lord asks His children to wash themselves, remove evil from their sight, cease doing evil, and protect the orphan. In the verses after, the Lord warns them that they will be devoured by the sword if they continue their current path, but they will be blessed if they obey:

The following two verses from Colossians appear to have to echo the same intention:

- The Colossians 1:28 - **speaks of** presenting everyone perfect, mature... this is echoed by the prayer of Epaphras in 4:12 ... that you may stand mature, perfect, complete and fully knowing the will of God on everything.
- **To become like** Colossians 3:9-14 says to *"put on the new self who is being renewed... to have a " a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another,"...*

As we approach the conclusion of this book, I invite us to respond to God's invitation to reason with Him. Let's metabolize and integrate into our being the life-giving teachings and instructions we have received through this book. **Lets declare a few fundamental truths first.**

Colossians 3:3: *"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*

- **we no longer live and our life is in Christ**

Colossians 3:4: When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

- **When Christ is revealed you will too...** (the work of God in you is hidden until...)

Colossians 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (Other God worship)

- **because this is true we are to consider our body dead to its desires**

In other words, your experienced reality, your being, is now fundamentally different because of the work of Christ. (think Noah's Baptism on Easter, a new creation)

Colossians 2:12... *having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

Galatians 3:26-27 (NASB) *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."*

You are new creation, adopted child that God invites you to risen with Him:

With this in mind, how do we respond to God with reason while also allowing this newness of life to become an integral part of our experience?

Our answer should be what Paul and the Holy Spirit instruct us:

Colossians 3:5 Dead to work of sin.

1 Peter 2:24b (NASB) *"...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness;"*

Romans 6:11 (NASB) *"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

Only the ones born in Christ see this as the way to life, as their answer.

It is through walking out this verse that one enters into a renewed life, traversing into a new existence. There is no other way!

As we delve into the concluding verses, one thing that becomes strikingly apparent is Paul's intimate relationship with the people of the church of Colosse. He offers instructions and praise by name. Considering that this letter is also intended for us, I propose a method to receive it with equal intimacy.

Allow me to outline three groups of individuals I frequently interact with here in our church. By identifying with one of these groups, perhaps you can find resonance and use this commonality as a constructive framework to respond obediently to the Lord Jesus. (I will name them then explain.)

Childlike: innocent, naive to the costs of following Christ

Adolescence: stunned by the demands of the life in Christ, wondering, what to do...

Mature: facing the demands of life in Christ and imitating Him

I can't help it but think that this is why Epaphras prays in 4:12 ... *that you may stand mature, perfect, complete and fully knowing the will of God on everything*

- Let's flesh out these categories a bit more in order to consider how we grow and mature in the Lord... it's not much different from how we grow in general.
- Christ is our standard, (recall the movie the passion of Christ)

As Children: We all enter this world as children; none are born as adults. In our infancy and later in our childlike state, we are unable to understand something fundamental about the world—it is full of pain, tragically so. Paul understands that in our path to grow in Christlikeness, we start like children, but his heart is that we all grow.

1 Corinthians 14:20 (NASB) "*Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.*"

Galatians 4:19 (NASB) "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—"

Adolescent Inadequacy:

The Danger of Coping Mechanisms

As we are ushered into the adult years, the Lord helps us develop new sensibilities towards life. Moving from childhood to adulthood is scary. Does this ring true for you?

My 13-year-old and I are constantly talking about the brokenness that surrounds us and the brokenness in us. The pressure of this truth can be crushing; some develop coping mechanisms to bear it, avoiding its weight.

There is a danger that arises when we have the capacity to develop coping mechanisms to avoid the pain of change, or pain in general.

Can you recall this time of life? How did you cope with the inadequacy you felt in the face of a frightening world? Did you seek something to comfort you, is this thing another savior?

Take comfort: Hebrews 2:14-1 (NASB): *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who through **fear of death** were subject to slavery all their lives.*

Warning: One can become trapped, enslaved by coping mechanisms and fall into a vicious cycle of numbing oneself to the call to die to our sinful ways. This way, we do not grow beyond this stage of life. The difference between a teenager and an adult lies in the fact that an adult moves past the paralyzing potential of pain through obedience and forges a new path in life.

Carrying our Cross as a vehicle to death in order to rise again. *(like martyrs, your seeding your self into the kingdom of heaven)*

Here's another thought on this: Somehow, as a society, we have created conditions that legitimize this in-between stage of life, the stage of not having to obey or respond to the demands of life. We are doing our children a disservice. We should hold the crown of adulthood for them to grow into.

Pivot Point - *By default we are like Adam and Eve, hiding. God fashioned garments of skin to **protect them from death**. **Christ becomes our garment of Life.***

Mature, clothed with Christ:

Transitioning from Adolescent Faith to Maturity..

Let's return to Paul in Colossians. We see that he has in view the idea of being clothed with Christ.

Galatians 3:27 (NASB): *"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."*

Colossians 2:12 (NASB): *"having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."*

This is something that God accomplished for us through Christ.

In putting on Christ and obeying Paul's instructions, we are actively participating in the maturity that Paul longs for us to have in Christ. Obedience to Paul's instructions is a bridge that takes us from Adam and Eve's childhood to our new life in Christlike maturity.

Colossians 3:10 (NASB): *"and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.."*

Here is something to consider: We can trivialize salvation and use it as a coping mechanism. You might wonder how that works?

In **Romans 6:1-2 (NASB) we are told...**

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

Do not use the truth of your salvations as a means to remain unchanged.

Lord is inviting us to maturity through, by, and in Christ.

Christ, who saw the pain of the cross and was not paralyzed by its tragedy. He faced it, knowing that a new life awaited on the other side, and that the Father would not abandon Him. He rose to newness of life.

If the way we deal with our sinful life does not lead to a practice of dying to self and rising in Christ, then we are undoubtedly in an adolescent stage of life.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14: *"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."*

Question to consider: Reflecting on Our Journey in Christlikeness

Having placed our lives under the scrutiny of the truth that shines upon us, where do you find yourself? In the continuum of growing in Christlikeness, where are you? Is salvation a coping mechanism for you, or is Christ's defeat of death the very pattern of your life? Do you understand the pain that life brings and live in such a way as to redeem it? Is pain crushing you, or is it a path to being made into Christlikeness? Are you participating in the redemptive work of God, transforming this world through our suffering into a garden? Are you remaining faithful to Christ in the suffering that brings about the character of Christ in you?