“Can’t We All Just Get Along???” Colossians 3:12-17

Please Stand and Open Your Bibles to Colossians 3:12-17

It was about a year ago I preached a message called “Love.” And it was in response to some infighting and division that was happening here at the church. There was a little fallout from it and some things that needed to be dealt with were resolved. But now we find ourselves again having to address the same things today. Now I know, for most of you, this will be a gentle reminder of our Christian character and an encouragement to stay the course. For some though, I hope it will help us as a church family get past personality conflicts and petty disagreements that have been raised to my attention.

Last Sunday an hour before service I was hit with a very discouraging report of conflict that made me spend the last week reflecting on my leadership and example to the flock. Frankly, to tell you the truth I felt like a total failure. My time with the Lord and discussions with our board this scripture kept coming back to me over and over and I felt the need for us to expound on it. But did you know that we could have the best theology on the planet but if we are not practicing it, what good is it? Orthodoxy is good and right and needs to be contended

for and upheld, but if that is all we are about we are no better than the church of Ephesus that lost its first love.

1 Corinthians 13:2
And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Over the year we had a lot of good things happening here at CSG. Conferences, outreach, mission trips. All awesome and outstanding for a church our size. But during that time my board, consisting of Male Elders and Pam who is our treasurer, have been spending more time fixing conflicts in the church than going about the everyday needs of the church. In my hands is our Membership Handbook, which describes what you and I are supposed to do as a community of Jesus followers. Most of the time it gets completely forgotten about and community becomes a place of conflict instead of one reflecting Christ's character. Our Orthodoxy must be followed by our Orthopraxy. **

It was much easier to deal with these things in the first century church. There was only one church per location, and you could not just run away from problems to the next church down the block. Small churches like us struggle because there is always

another one down the street I can go join. I have seen it over and over again in the church that this church was. God would move and we would grow. Then personality conflicts would arise. Then clicks would form. Then people would leave and the cycle would start all over again. See at a bigger church you can chose the people you want to be part of your “Circle”. It would be people you like and get along with. No conflicts, no problems. But what if God wanted you to have those conflicts so you can grow and die to yourself? The church is not a place for you to find contentment and happiness. It is a place for you to grow and glorify God in your life. This is not new! The early church had the same problems…

1 Corinthians 3:1-3
And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

Are we to just cop an attitude when someone rubs us the wrong way? Paul put it like this to those that were not walking in the Spirit…

Galatians 5:13-15
For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Is this the way you want CSG to be defined? Great Orthodoxy but terrible Orthopraxy. Don’t you think when we treat another brother or sister wrongly and they run of to another church that they bring it up to their new fellowship? I know some of you have been deeply hurt at your last church and it would break my heart that it would happen to you here all over again. A matter of fact I would close the whole church down if this becomes the case. Do you know what James says about this kind of behavior?

James 3:13-18
Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and

every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

He will go on to say…

James 4:1
Where do wars and fights come from among you?

When we are living in conflict with one another, we are reflecting our old nature and are actually agents of Satan at this point!

Now let us get into our scripture today. First the context. Colossae was a city in modern day Turkey that is close to the city of Laodicea. It was the source of cold water and Hierapolis was a source for Hot Water. This church was not founded by Paul but by one of his converts in Ephesus. It was a gentile church and by the time Paul wrote this had been infected by false teaching and internal problems. Paul, instead of just talking about the problems, uses the truth to counteract the lies. In Chapter one he deals with the lie of Gnosticism by

presenting Jesus as the God Man. He begins Chapter two with this…

Colossians 2:1-3
For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He would then warn them of…

Colossians 2:8
Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

And then dealing with the cult of the Judaizers he would write…

Colossians 2:16-17
So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Now at the top of the chapter we are in today we are told…

Colossians 3:1-3
If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

What does this look like? Well, we are to put to death the characteristics of our old nature and to put off…

Colossians 3:8-11
But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Do you realize that this list of people are those that did not get along? Paul is getting down to the nitty gritty of what was causing division in the church and what was causing him great

conflict. If we are all one in Christ, why do we treat each other like we are not?

Now getting to the application of all this…

Colossians 3:12-13
Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

You need to understand this is not a suggestion. The therefore is there to bring about the application that has to be applied. There is no option here. To put on is like the putting on of a coat. You are to cover yourself with it. When people see you are no longer wearing the coat of your old nature but the coat of the new man. If you notice most of these behaviors are learned behaviors. They don’t come naturally. They only come as we decide to die on a daily basis. Surrendering our lives to His will and not our own.

Luke 9:23
Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

When we die to ourselves it is only then we can fulfill the imperative in verse 13. Are bearing with one another? (Repeat Examples) Are you forgiving them? (More Examples) How did Christ forgive you?

Romans 5:8
But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Was it when you were easy to get along with? When you were loving and kind? NO. When we were at our worst!

It is not an option folks. We have to learn to get along. If we don’t get past this, we will never be what God wants us to be. And this is an exhortation to the leaders as well. We are going to be self-searching in our leadership to make sure we are putting these into practice; this includes women’s and men’s groups and all the other events we have going on. I will be having all the leaders gather together for regular meetings and make sure these things are being practiced and making

appropriate changes as they need be. Next year things are going to get better. They have to, or again we have failed and our lampstand will be put out. A leader of one ministry has to get along with the leader of another. I will not allow the clicks to start again because I know where they will go. And where does it all flow from?

Colossians 3:14
But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

The word for love here is Agape. People try to say it is God's love only, but this is not true. In its truest form it is a love that sacrifices ourselves for the benefit of others expecting nothing in return. It does define God's love, but unbelievers practice it too.

Luke 6:32-36
But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and

your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

You need to understand that there is a storm coming and we are going to need each other and be able to rely on each other. Life is not going to get any easier as we approach the Tribulation. The enemy hates what we are doing and if he can't get us from the outside he will get us on the inside. I know for a fact that is what has been happening. Some of us are weak and struggling with issues and he has tempted us to take it out on each other; it's time for self-reflection and prayer to get back on the path He has for us. It might mean some of us will need to step back for a while and do some healing or maybe it's time for you to step up and be the better person. We need you all in the fight! There is a sea of lost souls out there that need us. Let's remember the words of Jesus...

John 13:34-35
"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Please pray for me to live this out in my leadership. Please pray for each other that we would reflect this as a church. Let’s pray for ourselves that Jesus would help us to live this out in the days ahead.