

Col 3 – 90
Col 3: 1- 17 THE LIFE OF GRACE
Aspiration, Mortification, and Transformation

Advent is over, but before we go back to the Gospel according to Mark, I want to take two weeks and do an overview of Col 3.

Why?

Because, as I mentioned two weeks ago, I want to encourage us as a church to take the first 90 days of 2025 to Memorize Col 3.

This is simply something to consider. There will be no sign ups or checkups.

This idea came to me a number of weeks ago.

I borrowed the title from Exodus 90, a spiritual exercise/discipline ministry for men, and I'm calling Col 3:90. It combines the common focus for those who choose to do it with the spiritual discipline of scripture memory, The goal is to Memorize Colossians Chapter 3, OR AS MUCH as you can, in 90 days

Over the years, I have found a great benefit to memorizing longer passages of scripture, and Col 3 is one of my favorites. It has been several years since I reviewed that chapter in terms of memorization. Pound for pound, Col 3 is one of the best, richest, and most practical chapters in the Bible, so I look forward to diving back into it.

Honestly, the best and most concise advice I could give someone for spiritual growth would be to cultivate the habit of memorizing and meditating on the Word.

This sort of practice may be new to you, but It is a great way to get a change of pace in your spiritual habits.

The benefits of scripture memorization and meditation can be deep and long-lasting, when approached with an open teachable heart.

Should you like to take the challenge, simply use your own favorite translation and get started.

THIS IS A NO-LOSE PROPOSITION.

If you only memorize ONE verse, you will benefit. It is not a competition, and no one will know if you are doing it unless you seek out a partner to participate with you.

There will be no ribbons, awards, logos, T-shirts, or recognition. The true reward would be having the Word hidden in the heart and the fruit of God's work in your life. .

The idea would be to start on Jan 1 and end by March 30....or continue for as long as you like.

That said, I want to begin with a flyover of Col 3 in two parts. Today v. 1-17

Chap 3 Insights: THE LIFE OF GRACE v. 1-17
ASPIRATION – MORTIFICATION – TRANSFORMATION

These first two terms reflect an old way of looking at the spiritual life: Aspiration and Mortification

ASPIRATION v. 1-4

1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

The idea of 'aspiration' is

1. A strong desire for high achievement.
2. An object of such desire; an ambition.

Scripture is full of such desires and goals: They are not like the inspirational messages of a life coach guru. The aspirations of scripture are not 'life hacks' designed to give you the best life now or to help you self-actualize.

NO, the aspirational words and COMMANDS of scripture are the very words of our creator, our Lord and master. They are ways of living out the implications of the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel. Familiar aspirations from the OT are found in Ps 27 and Ps 84

Ps 27:4 One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire^[a] in his temple.

Ps 84:10 For a day in Your courtyards is better than a thousand *elsewhere*.
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God Than live in the tents of wickedness.

Our songs of praise and worship are Aspirational. They are faith filled desires that lift our hearts and minds toward God and eternal values.

- v. 1 seek, Present Imperative

This means a continuous, ongoing effort is required. We are to persistently seek and keep on seeking

Typically, things in life that are worth having require persistence. You don't become accomplished at anything without an ongoing effort.

PRINCIPLE: Grace is NOT opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.

Don't be fooled into thinking that a life of grace and faith doesn't require persistence. There is a reason that scripture calls us to fight the good fight of faith and to stand firm, etc.

V 2 set your mind (pre-occupy),- exercise the mind; to interest oneself intensely, set the affection on

Again, this is a present imperative - a command to do this as an ongoing effort.

WHAT OCCUPIES YOUR MIND?

HONESTLY...what do you easily give yourself to in terms of time, thought and affection?

If you can't answer that question, just ask your wife, husband, kids, parents, roommate, co-workers, etc. THEY KNOW

Years ago, I read this passage in a modern French translation and the word used is "preoccupy" your mind/affection etc with thing above, not on things of the earth.

The use of that word really made sense and opened the meaning for me.

What does it mean to be 'pre-occupied'? Think of a space being 'occupied'.... It means that it is taken and there is not space for anyone or anything else.

EX: on an airplane or a Port-o Potty, if you get to the door and you see the little sign that says "occupied", then you can't go in. The space is taken. It is occupied before you got there, i.e. Pre-occupied.

EX: Have you ever had a conversation with someone who seemed 'preoccupied'? He or she didn't seem to be listening or paying attention because they had something else on their mind. They were already occupied with something before the conversation started and at that moment, they didn't have space for what you were saying.

So, with our minds and our affections, we are to be PRE-OCCUPIED with the things above, not with things on the earth. When our hearts/minds are filled ahead of time with the things of God and Christ, then when the things of the world come calling, we won't have room for them.

The mindset of the world is, “He who dies with the most toys wins, or, my life consists of what I have.” We can’t stand firm against the constant messaging of the world unless we have our minds renewed with the Word.

Rom 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.* 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

We can’t be preoccupied with the things above if we don’t know what they are and if God’s truth isn’t hidden in our hearts and minds, i.e. the importance of scripture M&M.
What we set our minds on determines our seeking and thus the direction of our Christian lives.

The next spiritual practice after Aspiration is...

– **MORTIFICATION** – **putting to death because we have already died.** Paul gives us the theological reason for prioritizing the things above.... v 3 & 4

3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Then Paul gives the implication... THEREFORE...

5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 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— 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul’s reasoning is based on the *past* and *future* history of all true believers. We have died and our lives are hidden with Christ and our future is one of glory with Him. Therefore, there is no place for the sinful deeds of the flesh in the life of the believer.

Paul describes our present and future reality in **Philippians 3:20, 21:** “**But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.**”

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

This text in Col 3, along with similar texts in Romans, Eph and Phil, gives a call to live in a way that corresponds to our spiritual condition – dead to this life, but alive to Christ.

As in Paul’s other letters the theology of Colossians 1, 2 demands immense application. We must put off:
(This could be a sermon series in itself)

Sensuality—“sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness” (Colossians 3:5)

Evil attitudes—“anger, wrath, malice” (v. 8)

Evil speech—“slander, and obscene talk” (v. 8)

Deception—“Do not lie to one another” (v. 9)

Why must we put these things off? Because we have:

A new self—“which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (v. 10)

New relationships—“Here there is not Greek and Jew . . . but Christ is all, and in all” (v. 11)

What a great motivation to put off the old and put on the new! We have a new relationship with God and with one another.

These sins we are to put off are relational sins. We now have a new self, renewed to new true knowledge, so the result is a new way to relate to God and others.

The result is

TRANSFORMATION

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things *put on love*, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

PUT ON...

EX: Linda and grandkids have gone caving with Dan and some of his kids on a couple of occasions. They come home muddy and filthy. Imagine how crazy it would be to come home, shower, and then put on those same wet muddy clothes.

Why would anyone ever choose to defile his or her freshly washed body with soiled, smelly clothes. Yet many of us believers often clothe ourselves with sinful behavior that does not fit with our purified identity in Christ.

Here Paul is reminding us of what is fitting and appropriate for the believer. (Eph 5, Col 3)

As God's people we are called to live in a way that reflects the character of our Savior. This requires us to progress in our aspiration and mortification as the vices of our previous spiritual condition are replaced with the virtues of our new life in Christ. In this passage God teaches us how to live according to our identity in Christ by putting off the sinful habits of our former nature and putting on the righteous conduct of our redeemed nature.

Paul grounds this transformation in the prior work of God's grace...v. 12 *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved,*

That is our new identity – chosen, holy, beloved. Those are terms of a relationship not rules.

What is remarkable is that each of these three titles was an honored Old Testament identifier for Israel, “God’s chosen ones. Holy and beloved.” 1 Pet 2; Ex 19

The wardrobe they are to put on in v. 12-17 stands in contrast to what they were to put off in v. 5-10.

This section from 3:1-4:6 illustrate the 5-E focus we saw in the Incarnation narrative of Advent:

EXALT The Father V. 1-2, 12

EMBRACE The Son v.3-4

Equipped by the Spirit . v. v. 15-16

Encourage Believers v. 12-25; 4:2-3

Express the Good News 4:2-6

Here we note one vital fact about this wardrobe: *all these garments can be worn only in community with others, in relationships.* With that in mind, our Adult SS TODAY we'll begin with a season of CROSS groups. These groups are designed to promote relationships, connecting and prayer. How tempting to think that these garments would be so much easier to wear if we did not have to wear them in relationship with people. It seems easier to be a “good Christian” when we are all alone but loving God AND loving ONE ANOTHER mean that we must be in relationship.

Our new self with our new identity will manifest itself through new relational behaviors. While Christianity is about spiritual realities it does not ignore the interpersonal realities of life. God created us to be in relationship with him and with one another.

THE TABLE shows what it cost Jesus to bring us into this new life and new identity.

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