

The Life of Grace  
3:17- 4:6  
Aspiration, Mortification, and Transformation

I've mentioned the Col 3-90 challenge of memorizing Col 3 during the first 90 days of 2025.  
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.

That said, I want to continue with a flyover of Col 3 in two parts. Last week we saw v. 1-17 Aspiration and Mortification. TODAY we look at TRANSFORMATION 3:17-4:6

Chap 3 Insights: THE LIFE OF GRACE  
ASPIRATION – MORTIFICATION – TRANSFORMATION

These first two terms reflect a Classic 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 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.

v. 5-11 give some areas of the flesh to mortify- NOT create a truce with.

The result is

TRANSFORMATION

The reality of spiritual transformation was perhaps best described by Thomas Chalmers as “The Expulsive Power of A New Affection”

Inner change doesn't come by just saying “no” to sin. There needs to be a new affection for God to replace our old affection for the world.

EX: anyone remember which Beach Boys song reflects this theological principle?? (Help Me Rhonda)

That new affection is cultivated by Aspiration v 1-4 and by rejoicing in our new Identity v 3., 10, 12

Our new affections must be renewed all through our spiritual journey. They are not self-sustaining.

A new affection for God grows when we see that we are the objects of His Affection v. 12

The New Affection leads to newness of life – Transformation This CONTINUES with v. 12-17, which we saw last week.

Then Paul breaks down the transformed life into several practical areas of Domestic life. Here, as in similar passages, Paul answers the question, “What if the Gospel comes to my HOME LIFE?” He addresses

Marriage

Parent – child relationship

Work

Evangelism

Marriage

In referring back to Eph 5 we see that we are to take our cues from the church in relationship to Christ.  
[24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands

**Col 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.**

**Eph 5. [25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,**

**Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.**

This teaching is much needed today as the institutions of marriage and family have fallen in status in our society. Marriage rates are down along with birth rates.

EX: It is appropriate to discuss this on “Sanctity of Life Sunday” because marriage and family are the foundation of human life. When the Creation Norms of marriage and family are undercut so is the value of human life as image bearers.

In these areas of marriage, parenting and work, Paul lists some commands, i.e. DUTIES.

Loving God and following His commands are two parts of the same Life of Grace. Don't be fooled into thinking that 'duty' is a bad four letter word. Duties are among the blessings that grow out of God's grace Paul's treatment of marriage here in Col is shorter than what he teaches in Ephesians 5, but compare . Col 3:15-16; Eph 5:19-20

In Ephesians, Paul describes this as the life in the Spirit. In Col 3 he describes it as a life where the Word of Christ is richly dwelling within you.

NOTE THE CONNECTION – the Spirit filled life is one that is filled with the Word dwelling in you.

**What Paul describes in terms of biblical marriage is the FRUIT of a Spirit / Word filled life.**

When it comes to marriage, we are to take our cues from God, not the culture.

WARNING: Don't Try This WITHOUT THE Holy Spirit. These are fundamentally spiritual issues even though the media culture will try to portray marriage and family in strictly economic or social terms.

EX: I learned a term this past week....“Ghost Story”

These are stories were journalists frequently cover important news stories, but miss key facts and themes that – for half of America,— are linked to morality or religion. Thus, these stories are haunted by “religion ghosts.” Our culture ignores the spiritual link to the issues...such as sanctity of life, marriage, and family.

**For those who are married...**

**Marriage is a DIPSTICK of our Vertical relationship with God – ie. Are we living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit – a life filled with the Word??**

Or we might say that marriage is the CANARY IN THE MINE SHAFT. If your marriage is poisonous then there is a good chance that the rest of your life is as well. The vertical relationship with God sets the pace for the horizontal relationship with a spouse and family.

If you are NOT MARRIED, then other relationships will be the dipstick of your relationship with God.

The commands of Col 3 must be read in the context of Eph 5. Marriage is a picture of the relationship of Christ and the Church. There is more going on here than just our happiness and fulfillment. It's not just romance, intimacy, a life together, raising kids, and retiring. The Christian marriage is designed to witness to the world about the love of Jesus for the church and the love of the church for Jesus.

**Christian COUPLE, your marriage is to be a mini-incarnation of the relationship between Christ and the church. Marriage is Gospel Re-enactment.** If people who have never heard the gospel looked at your marriage what would they think about the relationship between Christ and the church? If they were told, “the husband represents Christ and the wife represents the church”, what conclusions would they draw? What would they think is true of Christ and the church by watching your marriage?

NOTE: It takes both a husband and a wife to fulfill and reflect God's purpose for marriage. Christian marriage honors the husband and the wife.

In no arena of life is there a more powerful witness to the wonder and beauty of the gospel than in Christian marriage.

It is quite probable that the world won't understand the concepts that scripture gives us for marriage. The Christian marriage and the Christian life is rooted in the example and spiritual empowerment that comes from Christ. While we were sinners, he died for us. He humbled himself to the point of death on a cross. That type of life is not on the world's radar.

We will never have a healthy, growing, intimate marriage unless we are willing to die to self. We'll never have a relationship that reflects the mystery of Christ and the church unless we are willing to die to self. At the core of the mystery of Christ and the church is the SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE OF CHRIST.

These marriage themes could be a whole series, and they were back in 2015. But today is a flyover, so I can't go as deep as I might.

If you're single then you'll still have significant relationships – family, church, work- in which you are called to reflect this heart of self-sacrificing submission.

The husband is to take his cue from Christ – Eph 5 [25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

The command to men is as radical as the command to women. There was no marriage counseling in the Greco-Roman world that told husbands to LOVE (agapao) their wives. This command to live sacrificially for their wives was radical for husbands of that time. The Eph 5 passage shows that this command is ONLY FULFILLED when a husband loves his wife in the way that Christ loved the church.

And Paul adds in Col 3 – “Don't be embittered against them.” The word has various translations –don't be exasperated, irritated, deal with harshly. All of those are the opposite of love, which is patient, kind, longsuffering.

Don't let your wife's weakness or failures lead to bitterness in your heart. Bitterness comes when we think we deserve more than we are getting. Bitterness is the opposite of reverence for Christ. We can't revere Christ and think or claim that we deserve better. If we understand who Christ is and who we are then we must admit that we deserve hell, not a perfect wife.

Wives don't let your husbands' failures and weaknesses lead you to subverting his role of headship in your marriage and family.

\*\*\*APPLY\*\*

One way for husbands and wives to follow these commands is to NOT SPEAK ill of your spouse to those who are neither part of the problem or part of the solution. No men's group or women's group should turn into a bash your spouse group.

The call is to walk in love and grace with someone who doesn't deserve it. We are to do it out of reverence for Christ.

Husbands, it doesn't say, "Love your wives as long as they do such and such." It doesn't say, "Love your wives as long as they do what you tell them to do." It says, "Husbands, love your wives" period. Why? Out of reverence for Christ. Wives, just because your husband may not be worthy of respect doesn't mean you're off the hook. Submit to your husband out of reverence for Christ.

Parent/Child Relationship

20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

I believe it was John Piper who noted that these, and similar verses in Eph 5-6, about marriage and parenting are needed because there is a built-in tension between spouses and between parents and children. Why?

Because marriage is when TWO SINNERS SAY I DO, and children are vipers in covenantal diapers. SO, there is a need for some basic instruction to spouses and to parents and children.

v. 20 lays out the bullseye for children – OBEY your parents in all things (unless it is immoral, illegal, or violates God’s Word) IT IS PRETTY SIMPLE and is well-pleasing to the Lord. That word "obey" means attentive listening. It means receiving a word and then responding to it appropriately.

THIS MAKES YOUR LIFE VERY SIMPLE. It eliminates needless confusion and wasted emotional energy: “What should I do about this?” “My folks have told me not to do this, but my friends say it’s ok. What should I do?”

If you are MORE CONCERNED with the ways you think your parents are unfair or “out of it”, or “psycho” than you are WITH YOUR HEART OF OBEDIENCE TO THEM, in the Lord, then you’ve failed kindergarten of your Christian life. Your obedience or lack of obedience to your parents reflects YOUR heart toward God. THIS IS A God ISSUE, not a parent issue.

No matter how “together” your spiritual life, or your life in general, may appear, if you don’t have this posture of the heart towards your parents, it means that the rest is a shame or a show. You can’t be walking in disobedience in the ONE SPECIFIC area God speaks to you and be doing well in your soul.

Now on to parents...

(quote from ??? Keller???)

Listen carefully, as this is very, very important! No parents have ever, ever perfectly loved their children. J. I. Packer says "the kind of love we really need is love that is accepting and completely unconditional and yet never puts up with self-destructive behavior."

We as fallen people don’t do that well, at least not all the time.

Therefore, every person comes into adulthood feeling that they have not been loved properly, everyone. The only way that you are going to be able to grow up and NOT be warped toward your parents anymore is if you know the love of God in Christ.

If you had good parents, you'll continue through the rest of your life idolizing them and if you had bad parents, you will continue the rest of your life being bitter and weeping over the fact that you can't accept yourself because your parents did not give you that kind of love they should have given you.

No parent can give you that kind of love. You'll never grow up and you'll never be able to honor your parents unless you can look at your parents and say "You are no longer god to me."

But the only way that you will be able to grow up and be able to honor your parents and get away from them in the right way so that you can honor them and love them is to say "You used to be God to me but no longer, I used to need your approval but no longer. I stopped weeping over the love that you never gave me because no human parent can give that kind of love to a child, and I will never be able to give that kind of love to my child."

In verse 21 Paul addresses fathers because they set the pace for the nurture of their kids, even if they are not the primary nurturer. The father’s role is to model what God the Father is like. That may not have been your experience growing up and you’ve had years of sadness, regret or maybe bitterness toward your father. There is good news for you. That sadness can be swallowed up and overcome with joy this morning because God offers his fatherhood to anyone who will accept the gift of adoption by trusting Christ and yielding to be led by the Holy Spirit.

**21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.**

The goal of a good father is to rear children who are not discouraged. The word implies losing heart, being listless, spiritless, disinterested, moody, sullen, with a kind of blank resignation toward life. Don't be the kind of father who rears that kind of person. Instead develop a style of fatherhood that produces the opposite of discouragement.

To give HOPE instead of discouragement, we need to model what it means to have hope IN God, not hope in the fleeting joys of this world.

### WORK

Protestant Work Ethic...3:17, 23

3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. 25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

4:1 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

Paul is focusing on the nature of Christian living and motivation for engaging in work- in the marriage, in the church, in the family, now in the social structure. The chief concern of this passage is the nature of the Christian's work, not the issue of slavery

The gospel impacts the way we work:

Work is not a curse – IT IS A SERVICE WE RENDER TO OTHERS AS UNTO CHRIST.

If slaves are called to live out of the gospel by rendering service with a good will as to the Lord, then how much more should we who are free desire to do so.

IF THESE PRINCIPLES WERE FOLLOWED THERE WOULD BE NO conflict between Labor and Management. Coaches wouldn't have to threaten or punish players for lack of effort because the players would be giving their best as unto Christ. Parents wouldn't have to stay on kids about doing the kitchen right with a good attitude because they would be doing it willingly from the heart as unto Christ.

THERE IS GOOD NEWS to Express in the commands v 4:2-6 –

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with *grace, as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Note that the first step toward evangelism – “sharing the Good News”- is to PRAY. Do you have specific people for whom you are praying?

If you want to have gracious speech seasoned with salt, then keep your heart and mind rooted in the Jesus and His Word.

All of these transforming truths point us to the Savior and the initiating grace of God.

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Group discussion:

How do these verses on marriage and family and work land with our culture today?

What is misunderstood?

What makes a good Christian family different from a good non-Christian family?

How or why is marriage a 'dipstick' of your relationship with God?

How is Christian marriage a 'gospel re-enactment'?

How should a spouse respond if the other is not fulfilling his/her role?

Is there a tension between 'Fathers don't exasperate your children' and 'Children obey your parents in all things?'

What does the term "Protestant work ethic" mean?

How does scripture show that every job/task whether large or small is important?

Do you have people you are praying for to come to faith? If so, what might be a next step to take with them?

<https://tmattingly.substack.com/p/crossroads-failure-to-launch-is-that?r=7y66c&triedRedirect=true>