

Colossians: Christ In Us, The Hope Of Glory

Thinking of how much was going on, I was reminded of a story about Eugene Peterson, who was the translator of *The Message*. He was this deeply contemplative guy who has since passed but came to prominence when he was much older in life. There's a story in which Bono of U2, who might be, at first glance, the opposite of a guy like Eugene Peterson, was so moved by the way Peterson translated the Psalms that he wanted to meet with him. So he reached out to him.

At this point, Peterson was in the throes of translating Isaiah. Peterson wasn't quite sure who Bono was, which was fitting for who Peterson was, and he declined the invitation because he had a deadline approaching. One of the journalists who was working with Peterson looked at him and said, "You couldn't take a break for a short time? It's Bono for crying out loud." To which Peterson replied, "It's Isaiah!" And I have a sense that preaching on Super Bowl Sunday is a little bit like that. Yes, it's Super Bowl Sunday, but Church, it's the Apostle Paul! And so we get the chance today to close Colossians. It's going to give us the opportunity to reflect on where we have been. All that to say is it's very good to be with you.

The late Dallas Willard, who was a theologian and philosopher in some ways, wrote in his brilliant little book, *The Great Omission*, "The greatest issue facing the world today with all of its heartbreaking needs..." Now, I want to pause there. How would you finish this sentence? The greatest issue facing the world today with all of its heartbreaking needs. Just allow something to come to your mind right now. What is the greatest issue facing the world? Is it an increasingly polarized social and political discourse? Is it creeping secularism that seems like we're losing our footing with God? Is it digital capitalism gone wild? Is it the crisis at the border? Is it a diminishing middle class? A gaping growing divide between the rich and the poor? Is it wars and rumors of wars? I mean, how would you finish that sentence? Willard wrote:

The greatest issue facing the world today, with all of its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as "Christians" will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence. Will they break out of the churches to be His church—to be, without human force or violence, His mighty force for good on the earth, drawing the churches after them toward the eternal purposes of God? And, on its own scale, there is no greater issue facing the individual human being, Christian or not. Willard, *The Great Omission*

What a fascinating claim. The greatest issue facing the world today is if Christians will be disciples. Now, think about that. That certainly was not what would have risen to my mind on how I would finish this question. I'm not quite sure how I would answer it, but I don't think that one would have come to mind.

I imagine there may be some in here who think this guy is way out of touch. That's clearly not the issue. You may just disagree with him, which is fine. That's okay to do. But Willard has a point. To understand his point, we have to come to a thicker understanding of what it means to be a disciple, an apprentice, a follower of Jesus.

We have, in the modern church, created this divide between being a Christian and being a disciple, which is foreign to the New Testament. There is no second-class or two-division way of following Jesus. To respond to the call of Jesus is to be a disciple. That's why Jesus, walking around in the first century, said, "Come follow me."

He didn't say, "Come believe in me." Although belief is important. He didn't say, "Come confess certain things." Although that is a part of the journey. He said, "Come follow me." It was an invitation to be a disciple. One of the translations I like of the word *mathetes*, which is the Greek word for disciple, is the one that Willard used here, an apprentice. Someone who is learning to live the very life that our master, our rabbi, our Lord, Jesus, lived. Willard is identifying this gap, saying that this is the biggest crisis because if we run the logic through what it means to apprentice under Jesus, is to live it out into every corner of our lives.

We begin to realize it's not so simplistic that it solves those problems. But it certainly seems to start to take care of some things, both at an individual and a broader level. This movement of disciples taking seriously the teachings of Jesus, so much so that they were living the life of Jesus in every corner of existence, is what turned the Roman Empire upside down in the first-century

Things like a simple act of hospitality that we'll look at as we launch this habit in the fall. It flipped the world upside down. In the early church, it was this simple act of the love of the other, which is what hospitality is. Don't think just nice place settings, although that can be a part of it. Hospitality is love of the other. Jesus pushes this concept even further and says love your enemy. This radically flipped the world upside down because the disciples began to take the teachings of Jesus seriously.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was reflecting on the passage that we looked at a few weeks ago. He preached two sermons back-to-back on Colossians 3:1-4 in 1932. I want to read that text, and then I want to read one of just a little excerpt from Bonhoeffer's sermon. You'll see where I'm going with it.

Paul's writing, and it's a linchpin moment between high theology that he'd been developing for two chapters. Now, he's bringing it into the life of the disciple.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

This idea that you died and are now raised with Christ is the paradox of the Christian life. As we are going about following Jesus, taking seriously the teachings of Jesus, and apprenticing under Jesus, our life is no longer our own but is hidden in Christ. Paul will go on after this chapter to talk about the ways in which our life is attached to things of this earth. He'll talk about sexual morality, greed, lust, anger, rage, malice, and slander. All these things that organized a world dying off.

But Jesus, when he arrives, inaugurates this new order, what he called the Kingdom of God, which is continuing to take root over and over throughout the world, and the invitation to the disciple to apprentice under Jesus is to learn to put to death that old way of living, to step into that new resurrection life in the age to come.

Bonhoeffer spent a few weeks preaching about this in Germany in 1932. It was before World War II, and he was looking at a church whose allegiance to Jesus was being pulled away into other directions. He was bringing the church back to this text because the reality that you have been raised with Christ should fundamentally reorder everything about your life.

It is so simple, in a sense, to understand. I identify with Christ's death. Therefore, I identify with his resurrection, but it is very difficult to get into our bones. It's one thing to comprehend. It's another thing to allow it to saturate the very life that we live in the ordinary places of our living. So here's an excerpt from the second of Bonhoeffer's sermon.

But Christ came into the world not so that we should understand him but so that we should cling to him so that we simply let him pull us into the unbelievable event of the resurrection so that we simply have it said to us, said to us in all of its incomprehensibility: You have died—and yet you have been raised! You are in the darkness—and yet you are in the light. You are afraid—and yet you can be glad. Right next to each other the completely contradictory; right next to each other, just the way the two worlds, our world and the world of God, are right next to each other. Bonhoeffer

I love that opening line. Jesus came not so we could understand him but cling to him. This is the posture of a disciple of Jesus. Someone who clings to Jesus. Who focuses and orients the whole of their life around being with Jesus, whether in word or in deed, as Paul would say elsewhere in Colossians.

We follow Jesus; we cling to him because he is our master in which we are apprenticing under. We're learning to step into that world of God,

as Bonhoeffer says, right here in the midst of this one. And what we find when we come to our text this morning is, in some ways, we're reading somebody else's mail. That's what's happening here.

Paul seems like he's just tying up loose ends. Tell Archippus this, Epaphras that, and Tychicus this. That is what's happening, but what I want you to do is zoom out one layer and realize what Paul is doing here. He's addressing this burgeoning group of collaborators who are figuring out how to live in light of the reality that they have been raised with Christ right here in the midst of this life.

There's a church, there's a community that's taking root in the first century, and we get a little bit of a glimpse behind the curtain as we watch the way Paul is spreading this gospel message, and he's inviting us to join. We, too, are in this legacy. The book of Acts ends in chapter 28, and in some ways, we are chapter 29. We are living into this reality, this legacy. These are our ancestors who have come before us in the faith, and you and I follow in their footsteps, learning to take seriously the way of Jesus in this life here and now.

So, let's walk through the text, and we'll land on a few closing thoughts that'll hopefully help summarize this book.

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. Colossians 4:7-9

So this opening guy, Tychicus, seems like Paul's courier. He's carrying this letter back to the church in Colossae. And Paul has this great three-fold description of this guy, which would be a great description for any of us following Jesus. First, he's a dear brother. Now, I love this because there's an intimacy between Paul and Tychicus that's demonstrated here.

Last week, Dan talked about how when you are raised with Christ, you enter a new family. That's why Paul calls him brother. He uses this familial language. Jesus is beginning a new humanity, a new people, a new family in the way of God, into which we are invited. So Paul looks at him, and he says he's a dear brother. There's an intimacy there, a connection.

Then he says he's a faithful minister. This is the Greek word *diakonos*, from which we get our word deacon. He's a leader in the church. He's working well for the gospel. It's a concept that anyone doing the work of God could be, you and I could be, these sorts of faithful ministers as we go about doing the work of God.

Then, he closes his description with this idea of a fellow servant. Now, the term used here is the same word that we would translate as slave or servant. Servant's a good translation of it. But notice the way Paul flattens the org chart if you will, and says he's a fellow servant. Paul is identifying with him. We are all slaves to Christ, is the way the New

Testament would speak of it. We are now in service of a different master, a different Lord. And Paul says, Tychicus, he's a dear brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant.

Then he goes on to mention Onesimus. Now, I wish we had a little bit more time because Onesimus is a really fascinating character. The book of Philemon is written in the same context as this letter. In fact, many commentaries will lump together Colossians and Philemon because they're so intimately connected. But Onesimus was a slave whose owner was Philemon. And from what we can understand and piece together in this story, Onesimus was having issues with Philemon. So he actually goes to describe the situation with Paul, and Paul then writes the letter of Philemon back to Philemon because there was tension around this new social ordering.

Dan talked about this last week. This idea of slavery in the first century is never something the New Testament sanctions as a good healthy practice, but rather, Paul brilliantly is writing to a particular people at a particular time. So in his writings of saying, slaves obey your masters and masters serve your slaves, he's planting the seeds for really a societal revolution on this idea of slavery without just jumping in and blowing it up right there. Onesimus is trying to work in this tension. The fact that Paul names this slave here is profound. It's a pretty big reality in which he says that he is a faithful and dear brother as well. Paul is identifying with Onesimus.

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. vv. 10-11

So, we don't know much about either of these characters. Paul calls one a fellow prisoner. We don't know if that meant they spent time behind bars together or if they were both just imprisoned for the gospel. But what we know as Paul is writing to this group of followers of Jesus is that, at times, following Jesus has consequences. To follow faithfully in the way of Jesus not only led to Paul being in prison, he's writing from prison, but it also means this other fellow prisoner spent time for the gospel behind bars.

He talks about this other character who sends the greetings, and he says that these are the only Jews who are my coworkers in the kingdom of God with him. Now, one of the arguments that's always happening beneath the New Testament is that Paul is taking the gospel to the Gentiles. And it's simple for us to think now, of course, the gospel's spreading. It's really hard for us to bridge this chronological gap to see how radical that was in the history of the world that a religion would branch beyond just one people group, one ethnicity. So, it's now that the gospel is moving beyond the Jews.

This caused all sorts of trouble in the church. This is the entire book of Galatians. Paul addressed the way that this issue was blowing up a church because the Jews weren't sure if they needed to become Jewish

in order to be Christians. The gospel message is much different than that. It's much more beyond that. You don't have to go through those things. Your particularities are welcome into the kingdom of God because the kingdom of God transcends those differences. Paul says that only three Jews so far are co-working with him. My gut tells me it's because of the controversy in Paul's mission of taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Gentiles is just a non-Jewish person. I am a Gentile. I am not Jewish. It's not a pejorative. It's not meant to be ill-suited. It's simply, in the technical sense, a non-Jewish person.

We are then reintroduced to Epaphras.

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. vv. 12-15

Now, Epaphras, we have met before. He's the pastor of the church in Colossians. He actually planted this church and was doing work in this region in which you find Laodicea and Hierapolis as well. So, in some ways, he's overseeing these churches and these different church plants. He's going to Paul to tell him about how the gospel's taking root. He's encouraged by this. And it says that this pastor is the first one who is always wrestling in prayer for them. It's a beautiful description of pastoral ministry. It's a really important one. It's one I've been sitting with this week as a pastor and leader, wondering if this is how I am. Can it be said of me that I'm constantly wrestling in prayer for you all? Certainly, I pray for you frequently. But there's something about this particular description, wrestling in prayer, that I really like.

It's the task of the pastor, of the leaders of our church, to be wrestling for you in prayer. But the prayers are aimed at two particular things. That you may stand firm in all the will of God, and mature and fully assured. We're going to get back to that. We're actually going to end our time looking at those two things. This is what that character, Epaphras, is doing. Paul says he vouches for him, that he's doing this work.

He says, "*Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.*" Don't miss the radical nature of this. Dan talked a little bit about this last week as well. Nympha, being mentioned all by herself without her husband's name, means that she is probably a woman of great wealth. It's unlikely that she would have been able to sustain herself unless she had great wealth and had a church meeting in her home.

This is when we go back to the tension of the Jew and Gentile thing, the fact that Paul would name a woman here and that Jesus, by the way, having women disciples was utterly profound and contrasting to the culture of the day. It is stunning that Paul mentions here and gives specific notice both to a slave and to a woman.

Because the status of women in the first century was more akin to property than it was to being human, Paul is elevating the posture here. And he's saying this woman, Nympha, send my greetings to her because she is doing this work. She has a church meeting in her home, pouring back into this movement of God.

Then we get to verse 16, and Paul shifts a little bit from greetings to a little bit more of instructions.

After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. vv. 16-18

So you get a little bit more of us reading someone else's mail, and you see behind the curtain how these churches viewed one another. These letters would circulate from church to church. They didn't necessarily have the New Testament that they could hold in their Bible. They're writing the New Testament. And so they'd write these letters, and they'd send them to these churches, and you see this unity of church gatherings in which they're learning to follow Jesus together. Come back to that imagery. They're learning to live in light of what it means that they have been raised with Christ. And so they're sharing these letters from Laodicea to Colossae to Hierapolis, all of these.

Then, in verse 18, Paul says, "*I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.*" Paul would probably be speaking this letter, and a scribe would write it down. But in almost all of Paul's writings, he would, at the end, take the quill from the scribe, and almost, in signing his name, he would write the words like this. "I write this in my own hand. Remember my chains, and grace be with you." That's what we believe Paul is doing here. He's taking that quill as a way of authenticating the letter. He says, my chains. He's writing from prison. And then he ends, as he often does, "*Grace be with you.*"

I love that phrase: Grace be with you because it's not just that it's a reminder of the grace of God, but grace is the animating force of what it means to have been raised with Christ. It's more than just a kind word. It's not just goodbye. It's much more. It's the admonition of may this driving force that floats beneath the surface of the Christian life enliven you. Even in my chains, may grace be with you.

So, with that, we end up closing the letter to the Colossians. Some of the threads that we've been trying to pull through this letter is the way it started. What does it look like to live in light of the reality that you have died and have been raised with Christ?

In the first two chapters of this letter, we're watching this church of all these different characters stumble around, figuring out how to live into that reality, trying to make sense of the fact that Jesus is the sustainer of all things. He's above all things. He's before all things. He's holding all things together, this grand picture of Jesus that Paul has painted.

It is all of this communally focused work. We read the New Testament with individualistic eyes, which is a very modern thing to do. At times, we miss that this message of the Colossians is about birthing Christ in us. A new community, a new humanity, which looks entirely different in light of who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

Two commentators, Sylvia Keesmaat and Brian Walsh, write in their commentary, "Colossians is a subversive tract for subversive living, and it insists that such an alternative imagination and alternative way of life is formed and sustained in the context of community." Now, the word subversive can feel like a buzzword at times, and so I want to just name that. I like it here because it helps us see the edge that this letter Paul is writing has. This idea of you being raised with Christ and your life dying off has a subversive nature to it. It means it can subvert the very status quo from which you are going about your ordinary living.

Hold that tension. The present age is passing away, and this new age is coming. That new age is breaking in that is organized by the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom of God that will subvert that present age. And we, as the church, are becoming a community that lives in light of that reality, and so, therefore, our community will have a subversiveness to it. It will look different.

Simple examples: How many groups do you gather with throughout this week and read a 2,000-year-old book? I'm guessing not many. Particularly in the modern world, we make claims about objective truth, and we say we're ordering our lives around these sorts of truths. That's a subversive thing. That's not something that your average Bay Area person would claim. And that's okay. But it's different. How many people gather in a room like this and sing?

Of course, there'll be a big room in Vegas in which we'll probably sing some Taylor Swift later today. So it happens, but it's different. We come together, and we sing, and we come under something like the scriptures. We take elements that are emblematic of the death and life of Jesus. All of these things are subversive things that upset the status quo. It is the establishment of a new community.

One of the things I find the most beautiful about the church is that in an increasingly polarized world, we exist here together right now in a community of immense difference. I would guess if we had a conversation and had the skill set to hold, with grace, the conversation around politics and economics and social life and education, we would find a beautiful tapestry of people across all sorts of differences. We hold those things together through the grace of God because we recognize those, at best, are important, but they are not ultimate things.

Something like politics in the upcoming election. It's an important thing. It has an impact, but it is not the most important. It is not the ultimate thing. It's a penultimate. Something in which we steward, and we take care of, all of that thing. But at any point, if that penultimate thing divides a higher allegiance to the gospel and the kingdom of God, we've missed the mark. We've made it something it isn't. We've disordered our loves.

We exist in a community of differences—political differences, socioeconomic differences, and all sorts of differences. One of the beautiful things is that this gospel can actually hold that together. And I would argue it's actually part of our task to simply attend to this community because it becomes an example, a beachhead to the world of what the kingdom of God looks like when it's embodied.

When we live in light of the fact that we have died and have been raised with Christ, this new community begins to preach unto itself. Just the fact that we exist and hold that together. One theologian, Stanley Hauerwas, said, "The task of the church is to serve as the best example of what God can do with human community."

What a simple idea that the task of the church is that we live in community in such a way that it becomes the best example of what God can do with human community. We're aspiring to that. We're not there. But what an aspiration. What a way to view our role together in community. You're not just coming to consume; you're a part of a new humanity. You're part of a new family that's trying hard to hold together because we have an allegiance to something greater than ourselves.

Now, how do we go about doing this? I try to be driven by these practical questions. I want to return to those two things I mentioned that the pastor of Colossae was praying or wrestling with God in prayer for. First, the prayer from Epaphras was that his church would stand firm in the will of God. It's a good prayer for us as well.

What does it mean by the will of God? We often hear that I want to be in the will of God. I don't want to be outside the will of God. It's a good question. The best way to understand this idea of will might be the word intention, the intention of God. We all have a will; you have a will; you have an intention. You have the ability to choose things in your life.

A simple example is that you can choose to root for the Chiefs today; that's fine. You could do that. You have a will. You could choose that. You have a will about how you spend your days. You have a will in which you go about working. And you have a certain level in which what you desire to happen does happen. That's one way of thinking of the will.

It's the range of God's effective will. That's the will of God. How far does the things God intends to happen really happen? Now, overlap that with what we talked about and it means that we are living in tension. There are multiple wills within the world that are vying for authority and power. That's why we look at the world and think God's will seems to be diminished. God certainly doesn't intend these things, and you're right. God doesn't intend so much of the brokenness in our world. And the result of that is because there are multiple wills at fight; they're at war against one another.

At some point, our wills will be consumed into the will of Christ. So for us to pray for the church to stand firm in the will of God means that the orienting center of that church becomes the intention of God, not the intention of Kevin, not the intention of you, not the intention of whatever thing that wants to steal your allegiance to Jesus.

It doesn't mean it's effective. We talked about that a while ago. It's more about faithfulness. It doesn't mean flourishing up into the right. It

doesn't mean that's the will. This idea of the will to stand firm in the will of God is to make claims that say we are a new humanity that will not be caught up and distorted by these other things that vie for our allegiance. Stand firm in the intention of God.

As you read the New Testament and the Sermon on the Mount, you find all of these different things that Jesus is teaching the people of God. It's better to give than to receive, to love your enemies, to be gracious to those who bless or curse you, and to bless them. All of these things are the defining differences that we as a community elevate, and we say this is God's intention for our life as people living in this particular moment. And Epaphras says to stand firm in the will of God.

There's still one further question to answer as to how we do that. If we've been raised with Christ, we are now in that resurrected life. That's the intention of God that all of that resurrection would consume every corner of this world, and that is coming to bear. How, then, do we do that? How, then, do we stand firm in that? And it comes from this second thing that Epaphras prays.

Be fully mature and assured. This idea of maturity of faith is simply learning to live more and more increasingly into that reality that Paul talked about in chapters 1 and 2. That Christ is who Paul says he is, all in all, sustaining all things, before all things, above all things. He is the Supreme Lord of all creation.

We then have died to our old self, and yet we're raised with Christ in that new life. So, in some ways, maturity or discipleship, whatever word you want to use there, is about increasingly living into that reality, assured of what God has done in this world. And we then move more and more into that.

There are a few obstacles that we struggle with in this idea of maturity. I find often that we tend to carry around a defeatist mindset that we don't actually believe we can mature in Christ. But Church, you can. You can, in fact, grow in maturity in Christ. Why else was Jesus teaching us? Other than to say there is, in fact, a path in which we grow in maturity.

Now you can't will that all by yourself, but you have a role. You do grow. This is the work of the Holy Spirit moving, coming into our lives, dwelling within us, beginning to shape our internal being, our internal intention and will, bringing it into alignment with the will of God. That's how we stand firm. Jesus taught us to pray; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Because if we desire for God's will, God's intention for our lives, for this community and for the world, to slowly integrate so much so that if you were to cut us open, the will of God would fall out. Where it becomes not just something we believe but something we cling to. It becomes not just facts about Jesus. It becomes the very thing that naturally flows out of our life. This is the role of discipleship.

Church, you can grow in maturity. It's very much possible. I've seen it happen over and over. It doesn't mean you'll reach perfection. What I have found in my short journey on this earth, and I am in no way a mature believer; I've got so much to work through. But what I have found is that the more I mature, the more I come to a greater peace in God and a greater realization of my brokenness.

The brokenness just gets a little deeper and deeper and deeper, which is really the second part of how we grow in this maturity and assuredness. And it's that we begin to recognize that it isn't always just the surface things that God is trying to fix, but rather, he's trying to heal the deep wounds in our soul, the deepest wounds in us that begin to organize our action. Because what happens is we create this—to use more psychological language, which is sanctified language. God created that as well—unhealthy attachments or disordered loves. Another phrase we've used for this is you lash out because of a brokenness within you. This is what we would also call sin, of course, to heal that wound under your own power and authority. Jesus wants to heal those wounds so that you become ordered in your loves or secure in your attachment to God.

Let me play it out in a more simple example. If I have a disordered attachment to Lindsay, my wife, where I expect of her to heal a deeper wound, let's say it's a wound where I feel like I didn't have connection, there's something I'm longing for, communion, intimacy with another. If I map that fully onto Lindsay and say, "You have to provide that for me," I will always be expecting her to carry a weight that she cannot bear. That deep wound for attachment and intimacy can come in the form of a human. That's a blessing, but it has to be ordered. It's ultimately found in intimacy and union with God. That is the deeper longing.

The deepest desire within you is for that communion with God. And if at any point that deep desire, the deepest thing about you, if you aim that at something that is finite, it will ultimately cause a train wreck within your own life and will scar and hurt that person. That will damage them because they were not meant to bear that.

Think of kids. Think of the way we can have an unordered attachment to our children. We can layer all sorts of expectations on them, that they'll be this person; they'll do this; and we begin to live vicariously through them, thinking, "Oh, I didn't get to Stanford, but they will, and I'll put that pressure on them." All of a sudden, you're working out your own wounds onto your kid that will crush them, and it will eventually crush you. See, there is freedom. This idea of freedom comes from dying to self, allowing these unhealthy attachments to be exposed and to die off. Because here's the thing: until we crucify unhealthy desires for those around us to be more than they can bear, we are always enslaved to that.

We have freedom when we are able to love them for who they are, not for who we want them to be. Do you see that? I have the freedom to love my kids, my two daughters, who are beautiful and amazing, but yet I layer all sorts of junk on them. I have the freedom to love them for who God has created them to be when I can detach or kill those expectations and stop working out my own pain on them.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

So the task of discipleship, maybe to use a different language for this, is ultimately about this perpetual cycle of death and resurrection. You live in the overlap of two worlds. In which your heart is bound to that present age that's passing away. And the task of the disciple is to constantly put to death, as Paul would say in Colossians 3, those things that are ordered to that, those disordered attachments, those hurts and pains. Our task is to put those things to death. Because what we find is we are raised to a new life, free of those broken things.

This will take work; it will be difficult. But by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit meets us there. Our task is to name it, to recognize it, to hold it before the Lord. And then the Holy Spirit does the work of transforming it. You cannot transform yourself. You cannot heal those deep wounds on your own. You can do that in community, discerning the voice of God, whether that's a therapist, a friend, a small group, or whatever it is. You can come together with fellow believers and say confess the driving pain and hurt in your life. And we can hold that before the Holy Spirit, who begins to transform the deepest broken things within us. There's freedom there. Paul is saying, be fully mature and assured in that.

Just as Epaphras prayed, I pray that we, too, take on that posture. Church, you have been raised with Christ. Christ is at the right hand of God. So therefore, set your mind on things above, not on these earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden in Christ. And Christ is your life. That's where your freedom is found.

I pray we learn to step increasingly into that reality. As we read somebody else's mail this morning, I want us to recognize that this church that Paul was writing to is of the same lineage as us. It's a part of our history. The words and the messages to them are to us as well. In the same way that they were wrestling with the reality that they had died and been raised with Christ. So, to that profoundly simple and yet unbelievably difficult thing to get to penetrate every corner of our life, we too are wrestling with that.

Maybe the Holy Spirit highlighted those sorts of disordered loves, those unhealthy attachments. Whether it was the examples I shared or other things that popped into your mind, I invite you even now to hold that before the Lord.

God desires to heal those things in you. To find freedom on the other side of those things. Jesus, in Matthew 16:25, says, "*For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.*" What a message to lose our life for the sake of finding Christ. Paul later in 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 says,

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

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