

Lesson 8: Colossians 3 and 4

New Life in Christ, Christian Households, Prayer, Conduct with Outsides

In our last lesson, Paul delivered a beautiful prayer or hymn to the oneness of God, the Father and Son. He places Jesus Christ at the creation of the world as does the Gospel of John. He also mentions the transforming nature of a relationship with Christ. He warns the people about false prophets and teachers. Paul equates Baptism and Circumcision, calling Baptism the "Circumcision of Christ." There are also warnings against extreme asceticism, that is not a part of the teachings of Christ, and warnings not to be bullied into participation in Pagan festivities and feasts.

1. Read Colossians 3:1-11 and footnotes. Share any interesting footnotes on these verses.
 - a. **Reflection:** In verses 3:1-2, on what *do you* think we, as Christians, should focus our attention today? Be specific.
 - b. Once a person is walking with Christ, their old life is dead. In 3:5-9, what part(s) of one's former life does Paul say *should* be put to death?
 - c. What is the benefit of leaving these old actions, habits and attitudes behind? (See 3:4, 10,11)
2. Read Colossians 3:12-14 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes with your group.
 - a. Paul continues with instructions on how to live in-community as Christians. After "taking off" all the bad habits and vices mentioned above, what are we to "put on" or "clothe" ourselves with in the following verses?
3:12 _____,

3:13 _____
3:14 _____
3:15 _____
3. Read Colossians 3:15-17 and footnotes.
 - a. Reflection: How does taking the "peace of Christ" with you affect your outlook in life?
 - b. Reflection: How can counting one's blessings each day and having an attitude of gratitude help you deal with obstacles, grief and problems of daily life?
4. Read Colossians 3:18-4:1 and footnotes. These verses include a code of ethics for family life and households who live "in Christ." The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible states that the ideal family that embraces the *peace of Christ* presents a "stark contrast to the godlessness of pagan society, especially the tyranny of husbands and fathers as well as inhuman treatment of household slaves."
 - 4a. Do the instructions for living with "heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another" in 3:12, help to put the instructions given for household in a better light? (3:18-4:1)

4b. Does the context given in the Ignatius Study Bible above provide more insight for 3:18-4:1?

4c. Slavery, in a variety of forms, was a part of the culture in the first century. For some it meant survival after being affected by personal tragedies.

What advice and encouragement does Paul give to slaves? Cite verses used.

Encouragement-
Advice –

4d. What do you think Paul is saying to slave owners here?

4e. What do verses 3:25-4:1 *really* mean to those who did own slaves in the first century?

5. Read Colossians 4:2-6 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes with your group.

a. What does it mean to “persevere in prayer”? (4:2)

b. Compare the translations of 4:2 below. Does the real meaning change with the varied translations?

4:2 (NIV) ² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

4:2 (NABRE) ² Persevere in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving;

4:2 (NKJV) ² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving

4:3 (NRSCV) ² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.

c. What should be an essential element of all our prayers according to 4:2?

d. Reflection: When you are asking for God’s help, protection or blessings, do you sometimes forget to include this element of prayer?

6. Why does Paul say he is in prison? (4:3-4)

7. What does he want the Colossians to pray for in 4:3-4?

8. Read 4: 7-15. Several people have been visiting and comforting Paul while he is in prison. Who is among those visiting Paul?

9. Read 4:16 – 18) What are the people in Colossae to do with Paul’s letter after it has been read to them?

10. Reflection. What part of today’s readings are most meaningful or helpful for living a Christian life in difficult times?