

Yielding

a 30 day devotional
in Colossians

I N T E R N A T I O N A L
A N G L I C A N C H U R C H



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“To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse” Col. 1:2

The opening address in Paul’s letter to the Colossians is not to an individual but to a group—to the Body of Christ in Colosse. When we consider yielding to God, our inclination is to think of it as an individual effort. And clearly in some ways it is just that. But we must consider that we are called together as the Body of Christ, and each of us is to yield our life to our Father. So if we each have to do it, wouldn’t it make sense to learn from one another?

Truth be told, my first inclination when dealing with matters of my will is to work things out privately. That way, if (when) I fail I’ll not be as embarrassed (pride? What pride?!). Or if I don’t tell anyone what I’m doing, then I can forget about the failures and move on to the places that are easier for me—that I might have spiritual trophies to display.

It seems easier that way, but I think I’m mistaken. God doesn’t call us to *“reinvent the yield”*. He calls us to watch one another, to encourage one another, to be there for one another. That the *“success”* of relinquishing to Him would far surpass the awkwardness of the attempts. In Hebrews 12:1 we read *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

To become holy and faithful ones in Christ, requires using every means possible to come after Him. We have been given one another—will we let pride keep us from freedom?

Lord Jesus, I long to be holy and faithful, but that cannot happen if I keep my eyes on myself and how others see me. Please reveal to me the places in my heart where I am living on my own—that I might turn. Please reveal to me the places in my heart where I am given to you—that I might give thanks. And please let my heart be tender and attentive to those brothers and sisters you have put by my side on this journey—that we might truly journey together to your heart.

“Because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints –the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven.” Col. 1:4-5

If I’m going to be honest, I would have to say that my actions all too often reflect that I believe faith and love are things that I muster up from within. For example, even now I find myself at a place where the Lord has very tenderly shown me many areas in my life where my faith is not in Him but in myself. One would think that would be revealing enough. But instead, what do I do? I feel overwhelmed trying to imagine how I am going to find that faith to place in Him! I am looking at myself as resource.

Or perhaps you, like I, can quickly bring to mind someone the Holy Spirit is prompting you to show love to, but your response is an emphatic: *“How can I love HIM?!!”* Are we then still enough to hear the voice that says *“You can’t, but I can pour my love for that person into your heart.”*

But here we see Paul commending the Colossian church for the faith and love that they are demonstrating. And the key comes in the latter part of the verse: *“the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven.”*

Where am I looking to find faith and love? They are with Jesus. And they are stored up for me. And do you notice that they *spring from* the hope. There is no sense of hiding or of inaccessibility. If my hope truly is in Jesus, I will have full access to all of the treasures of heaven. Now then, where am I looking?

Father, as you bring to heart the places where I attempt to stand independently of you, please also give me a taste of what it feels like to be able to trust you to supply the faith and the love to walk this road I am on. And let that taste cause me to hunger for more and more of you. . .

“All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth.” Col. 1:6

This verse from Colossians reflects both the magnitude of the Word of God as well as the intimacy. Sometimes we stop with one or the other and miss being able to be in the midst of the God-sized picture.

“All over the world” clearly implies an expansiveness that is not contingent upon individual planning—especially at the time when this was written. We must remember how, even in our own day, we hear stories of conversions in places into which the gospel has not *“formally”* been brought.

But the bearing of fruit and growing is first of all, an individual response, a yielding to the intimate message of God. Here the Colossian church is being commended for hearing the Word and understanding God’s grace. The implication is that there was a clear yielding, a willingness to receive the fullness of the message, not cut it short by inserting their own understanding. Our own understanding cannot bring us to the place of understanding the grace of God. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

God speaks to us intimately, born of his heart of relationship; and at the same time, as we read in Isaiah 55:11 *“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”* When we yield to his intimate call, we are also able to yield to his greater purposes, that the whole world might know.

- *Where am I not yielding to God’s intimate call to me?*
- *Where am I not yielding to his larger call for me?*

Lord Jesus, remove my heart of stone, that I might hear, that I might understand, that I might bear fruit to your glory.

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Col. 1:9

There is something that happens in the midst of believers; there is a connecting that, to the world would make no sense at all. That connection is really the yielding to a greater purpose.

We understand that this is not an individual work; the work of God is the work of the Body of Christ. And so we must pray for one another for the wisdom and understanding that we need in order to be about that work.

There is also, in the heart of a believer, a growing understanding of the absolute necessity of and the power of prayer. If one cannot in fact recognize that there are spiritual battles in which we are engaged, then there is no real reason to be passionate about prayer. But when that is recognized, then there develops a focused passion to pray for those who are actively about the Lord’s work.

To be drawn to continual prayer for one another is part of the richness of our call. We are drawn to pray; that prayer strengthens others, but by yielding our own will, we are also strengthened.

And the clincher is that the Lord stirs our hearts to pray for one another, so that it’s not a “*should*” but part of the passion of being on the journey together.

Again, it is a corporate call as well as an individual call that we respond to. And in that response, in prayer for one another, we see the glory of our Father in ways to which we would otherwise be less attentive.

Lord Jesus, there are many works of your hands around me. I know that I can not pray for them all with passion and attentiveness, but I know that there are some that make my heart sing. Remind me of those places, please Father; remind me of the power of prayer; remind me of how much you love me and those I love. That I may be fully given to you and to yours.

“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way.” Col 1:10

It is as though prayer “*demands*” us to yield. What happens when we get caught up in the heart of the Father is that we are gloriously taken out of ourselves. What begins to matter to us is what matters to Him; what begins to fill our minds and hearts are the things that fill His mind and heart. And before we know it, we’ve left insidious self-preoccupation behind.

So when we are truly and open-heartedly praying for others, it is not in order that they respond in a certain way to us or to our needs. But it is in order that they might have full access to the Lord Jesus and his passion and power.

Look at the reason for prayer in this verse: “*in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way.*” What believers understand when they pray for one another is that the greatest love we can offer another is prayer that we might be fully open to Jesus. That is where all life resides.

When we are living a life pleasing to the Lord, the circumstances of life have little weight to knock us over, and the distractions that vie for our hearts hold less and less allure.

So to pray in such a way for one another is to strengthen the Body of Christ—the very place in which we can experience the life of our Lord in a fullness that is otherwise unfound.

- *How do I pray for those God has put on my heart—for ease of circumstances or to live a life pleasing to the Lord?*
- *Ask the Father to help set those prayers straight.*
- *Ask Him to show you one or others who can pray that same way for you.*

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.” Col 1:13

Rescued from the dominion— the control, the sovereignty— of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves. Could there be a more vivid contrast? Could there be a more explicit picture of despair and delight?

What strikes me in this verse is that we must yield in order to be rescued. Throughout my life there have been so many places where someone looking on would have said that I needed to be rescued. I might even have said that myself. But however dark that place, it was familiar, it was known, and so I did not reach out for those who could rescue. And so I chose to remain in the dominion of darkness.

But this “*rescue*” is the ultimate rescue. This is where we are snatched from the pit of hell. God doesn’t just bring us out of darkness, He brings us into light. He puts us in a spacious place. I am taken in mind to Psalm 18:

“He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me.”

Once we have yielded to the Lord in this way, it’s a funny thing. Then in the other, smaller places in our lives where we might stand unyielding, we begin to hear the Holy Spirit encouraging us, calling us forth. That we might not just be placed in His spacious place, but that we might walk the land that He has given us—the kingdom of the Son He loves!

- *Spend a few moments remembering when the Lord brought you out of true darkness—spend time thanking Him*
- *Seek Him to reveal the places where you are still held captive, that you might be set free*

“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Col 1:17

One reason why we worry is because we feel as though we must be in control of our lives. You can almost hear the serpent whispering insidiously to Eve in the Garden *“You shall be like God!”* We continue to buy the lie. We give lip service to our faith, but we give life service to attempt to hold it all together. How can we hold together what we don’t have?

Look at this verse—*“He is before all things”* which draws us to John 1 for clarity: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”*

Jesus and the Father are One, and they have been One since before time began. The verse goes on to say: *“in Him all things hold together.”* Not *“in my financial security”*, not *“in my cleverness”*, not *“in the number of good things I do”*, not *“in my degrees”*. No, in Him.

So if nothing was made without Him, if He has always been, and if He holds all things together, then why our reluctance to yield to Him? We just don’t look long enough. We may even find time each day to be with Him, but then we leave. *“But I must go to work”* you might protest. Yes, but He’s right there beside you. We somehow feel as though when we walk out of quiet time, or out of church or Bible study that He’s no longer with us. *He is with us; we are not with Him.*

I sense that even the repetition of this verse *“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”* a few times a day could bring us at least to the edge of our attempts at control—could at least bring us to the fence to gaze into those green pastures and still waters—could at least cause us to begin to open our hands to our Father.

Lord Jesus, forgive me my control. I can’t even see how far-ranging it is, but you can. Let me let You be what I imagine, that I might be able to let go. Lord hear my prayer. . .

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.” Col. 1:21

When I read this verse I find myself thinking of what it means to be alienated from God. I believe that is one of those terms that we use pretty loosely in our culture—we say we’re alienated from friends or family, and there is a sense of separation but not to the degree that we read here.

To be alienated from God does not mean to be a Christian but to be having a day where you really don’t “*feel*” the Lord’s presence. To be alienated from God is to be His enemy. And while again we can come up with the cultural picture of having an enemy, but there is no way we can begin to calculate the magnitude of separation from God.

By grace we are no longer enemies. By grace and our own will and working, we are able to make choices that keep us close along side Him. By grace the Holy Spirit comes after our hearts to reveal to us the places where we are drawing away from our Source of life.

Perhaps what can best imprint the importance of this verse on our hearts is to remember—to remember life before giving Lordship to Jesus. To remember the restlessness that could be anesthetized but never appeased. To remember the lack of peace that characterized even the most tranquil of moments.

When we remember, we can begin to get a glimpse of what the Father has done. When we remember, we can stand with broken hearts at the thought of doing anything that would pull us from Him. When we remember, we see Him right beside us and have no longing to look anywhere else. *Lord, let us live as a remembering people.*

“...if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.” Col. 1:23

There is incredible strength in this verse, and it is a strength which comes from an attentiveness to our Lord Jesus and our posture before Him. It is His part; it is our part.

We read the words “”, “*established*”, *firm*”, “*not moved*” and perhaps wonder how we might ever come to that place. But the first and last words of this passage “*bookend*” that process. We are to continue in our faith—continue meaning to persist, to endure, to remain. Faith is not an acquisition which we put on the shelf; it is a journey on which we embark and *remain*. Faith is not passive but active, and so we must remain with it; we must remain with Him.

We are not to be moved “*from the hope held out in the gospel.*” Where is the hope residing? It is held out in the gospel. Hope is a person; it is the Lord Jesus. And we are not to be moved from Him. In order to not be moved from Him, we must keep our eyes on Him—our hearts on Him. And then we will only be moved as He moves us, but that will never be “from” just “to”.

Our Father holds out the hope of the gospel, and in relationship we respond. If we are able to wash our hearts of the things that cloud our vision of Jesus, this established place of residing will have the fluency of a dance and the delight of the beloved with eyes locked on the Lover.

Loving Father— even what sounds staunch and stiff is, in fact, so very fluid in your heart. Give me the grace to make the changes I need to make in my life, that I may continue in my faith and draw every breath from my Hope, from my Jesus.

“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Col 1:27

In that day, for the Gentiles it was amazing—*“Christ in you, the hope of glory”*—for us today it is just as amazing. The two parts of this verse are equally amazing on their own, but even more so put together.

As you think about this today, ask the Holy Spirit to just let your preconceived imaginings take flight—that there would be room for the magnitude of what this says.

That Christ is in us. I know my human condition, I know where I blow it and where I am weak and sinful; it is a litany I know deeply. But I do not know the extent of it as my heavenly Father does, and still *“Christ in me”* Still, by the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling Christ takes residence. How often do I sit with that thought? How often do I take into account that fact as I go about my daily life? How often do I stop and yield to the work He is doing within me?

The hope of glory. . . The hope of glory is not reserved for the other side of my last breath. Jesus within us is that hope, and the glory began in me the moment He was brought in. Even before that, as He prepared my heart to receive Him. My eyes were opened to Him and to his work, and I was able to watch that transformation in ways that no human could have orchestrated.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”. Lord God we carry within us You, the very Hope of all eternity. Let us make clear the paths in our hearts, let us yield our own plans, that we might be transformed and—having been so—might be bearers of that transforming power—that the world might see and recognize their hunger and your reality.

“We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” Col. 1:28

In most ways this goes against the mind of the world, these words: *“We proclaim Him”* The assumption is that we are to give formulas, resources, access paths, you name it. That we might “figure out” how to live this life and then pass that information in accessible means on to others. But it must be complicated, mustn’t it? That’s what the world says.

“We proclaim Him” We are called to admonish and to teach, we are called to use wisdom. But it is not about formulas; it is about Jesus. It is about yielding our “expertise” and looking for/finding/following Jesus. And as we “watch” Him through the Scriptures and through how He is made manifest in his church, we find that very wisdom. For it is He who does nothing other than what He sees his Father doing.

It is in that pure proclamation that the Holy Spirit can do His work in our hearts. We read in Hebrews 4:12 *“The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* And we see that when we proclaim Him, we clear the path for his Word to work, *“that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”*

It is not an easy task to relinquish the world’s visions of success and be embraced by the Lord’s design. But once our hearts begin to change, we grow keenly aware of our need for Jesus and our longing to be set free. And even the most painful of relinquishing is done in light of the hope that the Father holds out for us.

Father, I know that there is much in my life that I “proclaim” other than you. Show me the folly of that, through the certainty of your love. Enable my heart to be so “taken” by you that I cannot help but let others know. Take me in, loving Father, take me in. . .

“My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love. . .” Col. 2:2

I love that this is how Paul speaks. He goes on in this verse to reveal that the intention for this is that they might understand and know God—a mystery revealed only to believers.

In these words he speaks to the very places in which we respond. When we are encouraged, when we step from heavy hearts to hearts that contain tastes of hope, there is a strengthening and passion and power that comes.

We feel as though unclimbable mountains might, in fact, be able to be scaled; we have energy for relationships that before seemed futile; we are rooted in God’s confidence in ways that enable us to step out where before we would have held back. An encouraged heart is a sail behind which is the breath of God.

“United in love”—again, can’t you hear the strength?! To come together with others has a power all its own. When people gather with a common cause great evil or great good can be done. When people are united in love, and that love is the love of God, well—just stop here for a moment and imagine! It is incredible to contemplate.

Our God is a God who encourages; our God is a God who unites. He doesn’t leave us alone to *“figure it all out”*; He knows how we need one another to be able to see the fullness of His heart. And so He provides for us an expansive terrain with others who seek His heart. May we find his encouragement; may we be found in his love.

- *What are the things of God that particularly grab my heart?*
- *How can I be in the midst of those things more?*
- *How can I draw others in to those things?*
- *Pause and thank the Father for the “encouraged” places, and the “united” places in your life today.*

“Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
Col. 2:3

How often do we find ourselves searching the places of the world in order to find the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? How often do we compartmentalize “*worldly knowledge*” and “*godly knowledge*”? How much heart energy do we invest in what the world considers important?

Gathering knowledge for the sake of knowledge is a fruitless gathering. You and I both know people who love to “*impress*” us with their intellect—spewing out facts with prideful authority that is boring at best.

But see how this verse says that in Jesus is hidden all of the *treasures* of wisdom and knowledge. It is the treasures that we really seek; it is the treasures we long for.

The question becomes whether or not we are willing to relinquish what the world considers wisdom in order to seek the Lord’s treasures. For as long as we continue the search in the world, we will not be able to look full at Jesus. Our hearts will be captured by the costume jewels that masquerade as treasures, and like a body overfed with junk food, we will soon lose hunger for what we truly need.

- *Ask the Father to bring to mind the treasures, the people, He has in your life right now*
- *Pray for those people to be so taken with Jesus that no other treasure draws their heart.*
- *Consider asking one of those people to pray the same for you.*

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” Col 2:6-7

All too often we long for the “one time” deal. Be it a 20 pound weight loss or the baptism of the Holy Spirit— *one time and it’s done!* I’ve done it; I have it. Now onto the next thing!

Relationship doesn’t operate that way. Relationship is fluid; it is constant. We are called into relationship with the living God. There is no “done deal”, there is the richness of discovering daily more and more of who He is and how He is.

In this scripture we hear the call of God’s heart for us. We are to continue to live in Him. Where we are living— in Him—so that our hearts are connected to His and our dreams flow out of his heart. In that living we are rooted and built up, we are strengthened in our faith. And by relinquishing our own designs for our lives and drawing near to his heart, we are caught by his design and that is where all life finds root.

And then we are told to be “*overflowing with thankfulness*”. The well of our heart is deep, and when we come face to face with the living God, that well becomes full to overflowing with a depth of gratitude that can find its source in God alone. As we continue to live in Him, that thankfulness splashes out of us and against a world that is dying for true thirst.

Loving Father and Lord, it is only through you that I can continue to live and to love. I know that my life is in you alone. I know gratitude that exceeds all human realm. I know the depth of the need of the world around me. Let me continue, that others may begin. . .

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” Col 2:8

We live in this world; there is no way around that—for now. And so really since birth we have been immersed in the ways of the world. Even the “good” values of the world are *still* the world’s values.

Some people were raised in Christian homes and exposed at a young age to the Word of God. Others grew up under teachings that may have been far from God or even dangerously near (which is how deception is often clothed).

But this verse gives us the clarity of our call. There is no way that we can be adept at recognizing all of the deceptive philosophy that the world has to offer. What we can do, what we must do, is to so immerse ourselves in the Word of God that anything else will quickly “smell” off. It may or may not be blatant, but by knowing the Word of God we will be available to the Holy Spirit in a way that we can feel the prodding, the nudge, and be attentive.

We must also be willing to relinquish any inclination to desire to be “*well versed in the ways of the world.*” As I said before, we live in this world, we are immersed in this world, and to seek more depth of *knowing* the things of the world, is to walk into the enemy’s territory.

- *How well-versed am I of the things of God?*
- *What areas of the world tempt my mind?*
- *Ask the Father to give you a hunger for His Word, that your mind might be filled with Him and have less room for the things of the world.*

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.”

Col. 2:13

We often hear stories of “near-death” experiences. We seldom hear bodily death and resurrection stories. When one is dead, there is nothing that can be done—save miraculous intervention—to bring him back to life. But here we read the opposite. *“God made you alive with Christ.”*

What grabs my heart in this verse is *“with Christ”*. He doesn’t make us alive and put us out in the meadow where we can try to figure out how to do life. He puts us with Jesus. Jesus who lived and died for us. Jesus through whom our sins are forgiven. God says: *“I’ll put you with Jesus—the very place of life itself.”*

What we do with this placement depends on how willing we are to yield. We can point to Jesus as one would point to a trophy “Here’s Jesus; He died for my sins!” we can report proudly. Or we can go about our lives as if we were out in the meadow. *Or* we can look at Jesus. And whose eyes can catch His eyes and remain standing—who can help, when in the presence of our incredible sin, but fall on their face and say *“My Lord and my King!”*

God took us from death—which is a place that we can personally do nothing about—and He breathed his life into us through the death of his Son, Jesus. We should go no farther than here and just sit in silence before Him—looking at the cost, looking at our unworthiness, and looking at the fact that He still chose us and continues to do so.

Sit with that for a time. . .

“Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules. .” Col 2:20

Again we return to the question of who we allow to be our Lord. If it were not such an issue, Paul would not come back to it again and again. If there were not a human inclination to add on to what God tells us, this sort of thing would not be addressed.

But let’s go back to Genesis 3 and take a look at Eve in response to the serpent’s question: *“Did God really say, ‘you must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”* “ To which Eve replied: *“God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden (true), and you must not touch it (not true) or you will die.’”*

For some reason we feel as though we must justify our beliefs which usually means embellishing truth. The truth is that we have died along with Jesus to the principles and rules of this world. Period. When we can get and keep that focus, there is no temptation to be drawn by the things of the world; there is no draw to keep a foot in both worlds.

At the same time, we have to be willing to honestly assess our lives—to look, and let other trusted brothers and sisters look, at how what we say and how we live measure up. Because without that clarity, the things of the world will bleed into our lives, and that is not the blood from which salvation comes.

- *Ask the Father to reveal to you where you are aligned with the world rather than with Him*
- *Seek his forgiveness; offer your renewed attentiveness*
- *If you have a Christian friend with whom you can be accountable one to the other, prayerfully consider setting up such a system*
- *If you don’t, ask for the Lord to come along side and be that friend.*

“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.” Col 3:1-2

I love this. We are given our positional standing—we have been raised with Christ. That is where we live; that is where we are to live. Okay, then how do we do that since our bodies are here? And so we are told.

“Set your hearts on things above.” (And then, just in case we have a hard time thinking of what that would be like, Paul reminds us that is where Jesus is seated—along with God!) Our hearts can be so easily set. I think of being a young child and wanting—having to have—a particular gift for Christmas or a birthday. My heart became set, fixed, on that thing, and it became the hope for which I lived each day. Our hearts are so easily set.

“Set your minds on things above” (And then, just in case our minds go down the slide to things of this world, Paul adds *“not on earthly things”*) One can go to Philippians 4 for direction :*“Whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—thing about such things.”* A sanctified mind can bring such incredible glory to the Father; an unsanctified mind can break the Father’s heart.

And we need also remember that we are not alone in being raised with Christ. So the deception that we need to do this on our own needs to be recognized as just that—total deception. We need one another in order to set our minds and set our hearts on the very things where true life resides.

Lord God, I confess to you my inclination to be lazy with my mind and my heart. I confess my lack of discipline to bring my thoughts to you and to explore with you the amazing expansiveness of your love. Loving Father, by your Holy Spirit, empower me to make the choices to keep my eyes and heart and mind on you. Just give me Jesus. . .

“For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” Col.3:3

This verse can seem to be confusing, when in fact it is a great place of hope. I died. Who is the “I” that is being spoken of?

I can only speak of myself when answering this question, and prayerfully in doing so can point you to your own answers. What died in me when I came to faith? The incredible loneliness of my soul died. The need to do whatever would work to draw the attention of others died. The unsettled feelings that kept me from true rest died. The inability to find peace died. The feelings of true unworthiness died. The inability to truly help others died—as I found prayer. The inability to truly forgive died. Resentment died. Chaos died. Addictions died. Independence died.

Much remained that was in need of relinquishment and transformation, but that was God’s plan as a means of bringing me to see my total and complete need for Him.

That my life is hidden with Christ in God also makes quite clear where it is that I will find how to continue about the transformation God has begun in my life. I won’t find it in the world—in self-help books, in popular psychology or television shows. I will find my life as I look at Jesus.

I am hidden; I am safe; I am His. And it is true for each one of us who has died and come to life in God through Jesus.

- *Remind me, Lord, of what has died in me.*
- *Remind me, Lord, of what you have replaced it with*
- *Remind me, Lord, of how I might continue to be actively about your transforming work within me.*

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” Col. 3:5

Here we see that all transformation is not up to God. We are called to relinquish the parts of our lives and personalities that are in conflict with who God is and how He has made us to be.

Truthfully, it is deeper than relinquishing—it is putting to death—that there will be no possibility for us to return to these ways. Perhaps you’ve experienced it as I have, when the things *not* of God are put to death, simultaneously the Lord comes and fills us with a new way, *his way*, of living our lives. He gives us a new heart and a new mind that can bring forth life rather than death.

When we come to faith in the Lord Jesus, that which is in opposition to our new life is explicitly clear. The Holy Spirit within us will quickly bring our attention to these areas. We do, however, have a choice as to what we will do.

Obedience is much easier on the first prompting. The more the Holy Spirit convicts us of areas we need to change and the more we turn away from that prompting, the harder it becomes to hear, and the more encrusted our hearts become towards God.

Seek the Lord. .

- *Father, what are the places within me that still need to be put to death?*
- *Where am I grieving the Holy Spirit and ignoring His prompting?*
- *Give me a life-choice I can make today, and give me your grace to make it.*

“Since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Col. 3:9-10

We looked at taking off the old self, a process that will be ours to respond to as long as we’re on this earth, but let’s also look at the putting on of the new self.

This is so wonderfully hopeful. We choose to say “no” to that which wars with God, and even more wonderful, we choose to say “yes” to what the Father has specially handcrafted just for us.

And the Father’s work continues “*which is being renewed in knowledge In the image of its Creator*”. Together with the Father, we take off and we put on. When we try to put on what we have chosen, there will not be a fit. When we let Him clothe us, there is such ease, there is such a sense that this is what we were made for. And it’s true, because it is of his design.

In order to continue to put on the new self, we need to step out in these garments, to see how perfectly they fit, to wonder at how God knew so intimately. And then we will be looking for more; and then we will be looking for Him more. For He alone can fit us with His glory.

Taking off, putting on. . .relinquishing and receiving. . .in the very heart of relationship we find our Father waiting with open arms to cover us with his love.

Father, I stop now for a time to just marvel in the things that you have clothed me in. Let me look at each one, see your heart, and spend time just giving you thanks. No time is better spent. . .

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Col. 3:12

More clothing!! There is no question, however, that none of these things can be generated on our own. What one of us hasn’t tried? Who of us has not sought kindness for someone who is being totally unkind to us, and ended up being just as unkind?

Such a gift when the Lord gives us these things, that we may be clothed in garments that so resemble Him. I had such an experience this past winter. When I walked out of the church one Sunday in December, I was laden with two gift bags and a loaf of beautifully-wrapped bread. There is a meal prepared for the homeless a couple of hours after church lets out, and people are often gathered by the time we are leaving. I always feel conspicuous walking amongst them in my neat clothes as I head towards my car.

That Sunday I felt even more conspicuous. I said my usual hello's to those gathered and waiting, when my eyes caught the eyes of a woman lying in a sleeping bag on the ground. *Her eyes---they were a vivid blue but not lacking the luster as with many of the homeless.* Our eyes met and I saw in her eyes light and hope, innocence and expectation. They held a light that was not of this world. The incongruity startled me as I walked, and for a moment there was a large tree between us. She disappeared from sight in that moment, but my heart had been grabbed. I walked beyond the tree and went right over to her--handing the bread to her and saying "Someone made this for me for Christmas, but I believe it is really for you." Her eyes remained the same as she smiled and thanked me.

It was not a matter of virtuosity; it was a matter of being compelled. There was no time to weigh the pro’s and con’s of my situation against hers or what I might offer. I offered what I had; that is what we can give. Jesus was residing in that woman; I saw Him, and those eyes have haunted me with hope ever since.

Lord Jesus grab hold of my heart and clothe me with you.

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Col. 3:13

There is nothing light handed about this verse. There is also no crack in the door for us to squeeze through. No place for “*but you don’t know what she did to me*” or “*but because of that person I’ll never be able to _____* (you fill in the blank, the offense).

The words are simple, unyielding and complete. There is no earthly reason that God should forgive us our sins. There is no logic or reasoning that we could find that could warrant such mercy. But He forgave us; He sent his Son to die for us. And these are the instructions we receive more than once in scripture.

Our human propensity is to wallow in thoughts of how difficult such a task is. And we are very accurate in that assessment. But think of a child learning to play an instrument; will there not be whines as to the difficulty of the task? Will there not be attempts to avoid the work? But what does the work yield—if the child is truly gifted and disciplined the offering transcends the time spent, and it is an offering that reaches far beyond the child.

Forgiveness is something that reaches far beyond each one of us. It is difficult indeed, but it is also something that sets the forgiver, the forgiven, and often many others who are nearby free. Unforgiveness is the dam that holds back the very life of God. And who are we to withhold that which has been given at such a price.

..

Forgive as I have been forgiven—Lord I cannot on my own. Walk me to the foot of the cross, that I might watch you dying and have your strength to lay my unforgiveness at your feet.

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Col.3:14

We Are To Be Those. . .

We are to be those
who bring God’s spaciousness to you,
who look for it and find it,
who describe it to you until you can walk in it,
and who then walk with you.

We are to be those
who see you perched as a solitary gull
and cheer you into flight,
or prayerfully cover your aloneness
as you wrestle with His angels through the night.

We are to be those
who cause you to remember
and return to the Lord’s faithfulness,
the times of His unwavering attentiveness,
especially when the memories have begun to fade.

We are to be those
who tend to your heart
as you are on pilgrimage,
to help you pack light and keep telling stories of “home”
that the way to Him may be clear.

We are to be those
who encourage you daily to lay out your treasures
as one would lay out favorite shells
on a shelf in the light.
That you might look long at the abundance God has given.

We are to be those
who steady your arms
as you hold the staff of God given for the work.
And then that we might join you in the lifting up of holy hands
in prayer and thanksgiving.

We are to be those who are His—
who are given to Him and to the journey to Him
and given to one another.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” Col.3:15

We spent vacation with friends one year in the same ocean town but down the road from one another. Had you asked any of us ahead of time how much time we would have spent together, we would have answered that we thought we’d see one another from time to time. From time to time turned out to be daily.

Whenever we came together, be it for a meal, to watch the sunset, walk the beach or just explore, there was a peace and an ease that we’d not experienced before, and we kept wanting to return to it.

One evening, after having spent the day in the Redwoods, we built a fire on the beach. The fog began to roll in and it blanketed us. There was such peace and such ease, it was as though God was covering us with Himself, and we could just “*be*”. We sat for a long time, just watching the fire and feeling the Lord’s hand upon us.

I always want to find words to describe feelings, and I certainly tried, but it was a peace too far beyond words. It was the Father’s peace. . .and we were thankful. And we expressed our thankfulness again and again-- to the Father, to one another; it was a place of holy ground.

We can do nothing to *make* holy ground—but we can live life with our shoes off in anticipation. The Father is faithful. . .

Lord God, I seek you—I don’t seek peace or blessing—I seek you. Cover me with yourself; you are my refuge. . .

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another.” Col.3:16

First the assumption—we *will be* teaching and admonishing one another. None of us has a monopoly on the word of God. Just as we are fashioned differently, so can one bring to the other new ways of looking at our Father, ways that are His word translated through our hearts.

Primary, however, in that teaching and admonishing is that it will come from the word of God. There are so many words that we give to one another in the world—words of “wisdom”, insight from magazines, books, talk shows, you name it. But those words are just words. In and of themselves they have no power. When we take those words in as authority, we are yielding to the ways of the world. When we give these words away to others, we are robbing them of true life.

We are told in scripture that God’s word gives us everything we need for life and godliness. Not some things, not what we need on Sundays or on retreat—*everything*. So why are we drawn elsewhere?

Just as God gives us his heart for those around us, so we must know that in order to truly love and serve one another, we must be immersed in his Word. We must let our attention be fastened to that word. . .we must dwell, linger, abide. Not that we know the words, but that we know Him.

- *What keeps me from leaning into the Word of God?*
- *What are the things that drive me to his Word?*
- *Ask the Lord to give you hunger for his word and the discipline to be with Him in the word.*

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Col. 3:17

The words that the Lord has given me of late are “*attentive*” and “*intentional*”. I bought my husband a wall clock this summer that chimes only on the hour. I thought I’d be bothered by it, but I have found something different. Each time I hear the hourly chimes I am aware that another hour has passed. That may not sound like a brilliant deduction, but often before an entire day would pass without me being really aware of it. I want to notice.

There is so much to every day that we miss; God calls us to be attentive. And here we see what that can look like. *“Whatever you do. . .do it all in the name of the Lord. . .giving thanks to the Father.”*

I spoke with a friend about how sad I am with how easily I can forget that Jesus is right here with me, *all of the time*. We both were seeking ways to remember that, to not turn and look elsewhere. And as we prayed, I felt a gentle weight pressing against my left upper arm. It struck me, that’s Him, leaning in to me—Lord, please let me continue to feel that pressing!

We need one another to remember to be intentional. We need to tell the stories about his movement in our lives, we need to ask for prayers for the hard places and call one another with “*sightings of the Savior!*!”

Our hearts *so* need to be postured in recognition that every good and perfect gift comes from God. And when we can be honest with our own sinfulness, the posture of thanksgiving is so much more easily assumed.

Father, I cannot even breathe but that you give me breath. Every moment of every day is a gift from you—and I am so grateful. Please bring my heart and mind to an intentional place, that I may be so attentive to you, that I may be thankful, that I may receive and carry the light of your life. That all may be done to your glory . . .

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” Col 3:23

This is perhaps the most effective means of avoiding resentment, self-righteousness, imposition, you name it. If everything I do I am doing for the Lord, then my heart is right. If I am doing it for this person or that, then what if she doesn't thank me, or what if he only expects more? What if she doesn't work as hard as I do? Or what if he gets a raise and I don't? What if I do the work and she gets the recognition. Do you see the breeding ground for contempt?

In order to get our hearts right to work for the Lord, we must return to the cross. We must return to the place where we can see our sin, where we can see it hammering the nails into Jesus' hands and feet, where we can see our total inability to do good. And then we must look up. We must see the look on his face; we must hear his cries, and know that anguish is *because of us*, but it is also *for us*.

As long as we remain in heart at the foot of the cross, our heart will be cleansed. As long as our pouring out is prompted by the love of our Lord Jesus, then He will have all of our heart, and we will have all of his hope.

Our worth comes from the Father. As humans it is very easy to want it from others, too. It is nice to be recognized, to be loved. And we need to offer that to one another. But the “well done” that matters comes from the Father through the Son. May we remain long enough at the foot of the cross to know that deeply.

- *Where am I looking for recognition outside of the Lord?*
- *How familiar am I with what He says about me?*
- *Take time to listen with your heart to what the Father says about you—go to his Word and read and listen.*

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Col. 4:2

In a rather crass analogy I can say that my dog is devoted to me; he is. When I get up, he gets up. When I leave the room, he leaves the room. When I go into the bathroom, he lies down on the floor by the door and waits for me to come out. When I call he comes expectantly. The picture is that he is attentive to me, and he is responsive to me.

We are called to devote ourselves to prayer, and it really means displaying an attentiveness that allows us to be distracted by little else. I appreciate the end of this verse that says: *“being watchful and thankful”*. I am embarrassed to say how many things that I have prayed for but not stayed with long enough to either see the answer or thank the Father for that answer. But when one is watchful, one is attentive to the progress of the prayer.

Being watchful also allows us to continue to pray in an informed way. Sometimes that is hard. I remember a point when, after praying for healing for a very dear friend, I knew that I was no longer to pray for healing. It broke my heart, because I knew what that meant—I knew that he would not be physically healed on this side of heaven. But as hard as that was, because I was attentive, I began to pray for his family—for his wife and his children, for what losing him would mean. I was able, I believe, to do some heart work that prayerfully prepared them in some God-ways when he finally died.

When we watch for the Father, when we watch the Father, our own faith is strengthened. When we assume a posture of thanksgiving, we can see anew the depth of what we have to be thankful for.

Lord Jesus, let me keep watch with You this day, with a heart that is so thankful for You. . .

(Paul) “Remember my chains.” Col 4:18

There is a grace in remembering. Often we want to forget—the places where we have been hurt, the places where we have hurt others. The Lord tells us throughout scripture to “remember”—keep telling the stories. And so I’ve told my story, or at least the fireworks, in many situations. But it wasn’t until I told it recently that I began to see my motivation.

The “*big, dark stuff*” isn’t something you’d like printed on your resume or in your obituary. But I found that I used that “stuff” as a means of challenge. As I was beginning to get close to people I would lay it all out. My pretense would be to show them how powerfully God had worked in my life, but it was just that—a pretense. Actually, with themes of abandonment weaving throughout my life, I would use my story as a challenge—“*Hear this and see if you’ll still be my friend!*” To whom be the glory?!

Not long ago, however, in the beginning of a new friendship, I shared my story without the great challenge. I shared my story and tenderly, tearfully listened to the themes as I shared it. I no longer lingered or dared with the “*bigger sins*” but could hear the rhythm of the Father as He was helping me to know what He already knows, who He really is.

Instead of being only able to hear how horrible I had been, I felt the balm of his love and was washed by the heart knowledge of how wonderful He had been. This was the heart of remembering. . .knowing that I am known, seeing that I am seen.

My heart finds rest in God alone. . .

Lord Jesus—bring us to remember—for in doing so we see both our total need for You and your complete provision of heart.