

Really?

You may say, really? I'm just trying to make it through the week with as few snags as possible.

Yet it's for these very reasons, the very real pain of the world in which we live that the apostle Paul urges you to keep on going in your walk with Christ. Return to the reality of Colossians 3:1, you have been raised with Christ. In Jesus, you have been given new life. Thus seek the things of Christ. Set your mind on him. You can live a life increasingly devoted to Jesus...

because the gracious devotion of _____ enables our devotion.

Human grit and willpower will not direct your devotions for very long. But beholding the devotion of Jesus certainly will. We can't do this on our own. We can't live for Christ without the grace of Christ actively empowering us every single day.

Meditate and behold who Jesus is and what he has done:

- Jesus ...is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him (1:15-16).
- And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him (1:21-22).
- In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority (2:9-10).
- And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us (2:13-14).
- If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (3:1-4).

Colossians: The Supremacy of Christ

Jesus Keeps Us Going

Colossians 4:2-6

"I can't."

"I'm not sure."

"I won't."

Paul wants to make it clear to the church and us that the supremacy of Christ, and our new life in him, has clear implications. Implications for how we are to keep living for His purposes, not in an isolated bubble, not alone in this building, but out in the world wherever we are. If we take a step back and look at these last two chapters we'll see order to Paul's application.

Chapter 3, verses 1-4 summarize the foundation of our new life with Christ. Verses 5-17 show us how life in Christ applies to our personal lives in what we should put off and then put on. Chapter 3, verse 18 through chapter 4 verse 1 zooms out even further as we heard last week to teach us how the supremacy of Christ is applied in our homes with our families. And now finally, verses 2-6 show us how our new life in Christ should shape how we live in and relate to the world around us.

Personal, family, and the world.

Jesus changes every area of our lives. All of it, no compartment, no area is left untouched by the reality of the new life we have received in Christ. Paul starts this final section by writing "continue steadfastly" (ESV) or "devote yourselves" (NASB).

Be Devoted

Be devoted to _____ (2).

We have got to see how important communication is in general, but specifically to relationships, and even more specifically in our relationship with God. The corn and soybeans need rain and sunshine, our bodies need food and sleep, your marriage needs quality time and communication, your new life in Christ needs thankful prayer.

Why do we pray? It's worth reminding ourselves of this. We see Jesus praying. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. The early church gathered together.

The early church: Acts 1:14, 2:42 | **Paul:** Ephesians 6:18-20, Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thess. 5:17, and 2 Thess. 3:1

Jesus: Luke 18:1

“And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.”

If you're looking for a reason to lose heart, you will find one. You do not need to look too long or too deep. There are plenty of reasons for discouragement and despair. Devotion to thankful prayer does not turn a blind eye to the pain and despair we see and experience, but it centers us on who is able to see us through. Thankful prayer centers us on the truth of Jesus. Thankful prayer grounds us in the eternal reality that will long outlive the very real yet very temporary pain we are walking through.

Be devoted to _____ (3-4).

Even in prison, Paul is asking for prayers that God would open doors for the gospel to go forward, to be declared. Maybe we should say, especially in prison. Especially in our difficult circumstances. Perhaps the connection in our modern context is that God would open up a door for you and me to declare the Gospel of Christ amidst a global pandemic. Even amid COVID19? Yes! Not even in, but especially in COVID19.

We saw in our study of Acts and we can see in Paul's letters, difficult circumstances did not deter Paul from pursuing and walking through any door God opened for him to declare salvation found in Jesus. Are we devoted to gospel sharing? Are we devoted to praying that God would give us the opportunity to share it with those who have not heard it?

Be devoted to _____ (5).

Paul gives a very similar admonition to the church in Ephesus. It is important to the apostle that those who follow Jesus do so rightly and wisely at all times, and one might say, especially with the outside world, those that are yet to believe in Christ.

Don't let the way in which you live, particularly with those outside the body of Christ, make a waste of your time with them. Let your life reflect the reality that you have in Jesus, the grace that you have received, the forgiveness you have experienced. Don't waste your time or your life. Take advantage of the time you have left by being devoted to wise walking so that those outside might come inside and know new life in Christ just like you.

Be devoted to _____ (6a).

Paul continues his focus on how the church should live and interact with the outside world by addressing the way we talk, or text, or post, or reply, or like, or chat, or...

Before you open your mouth, remember the grace you have received.

Yes, remember, whenever that time was that God drew you to Himself through Christ. But also remember the grace you received this morning or last night, or just five seconds ago. His grace that sustains you. His grace that empowers you. His grace that changes you. Before you move your thumbs to write your post, before you hit the send button, before you let go and let those ungracious words slip out, remember the grace of Christ at work in your life and your constant ever-present need for it. As seasoning gives flavor and enjoyment to the food we eat, Paul is exhorting the church that our words should have the same effect on others.

Be devoted to _____ (6b).

Remembering the grace we have received and speaking from that place of grace will ready us to respond to those who will question us. Being devoted to gracious talking will lead our devotion to ready responding. It actually makes responding a joy.

Some of us like confrontation, but it's probably fair to say that many of us do not. The thought of someone asking us a question about Christ intimidates us. What if we don't know what to say? What if they're smarter than I am? What if I'm not an effective witness?

I hope this puts your mind at ease this morning. Speak from the grace you have received. Remember the grace you have received in Christ. That's what the world needs to hear first and foremost anyway.