

July 15, 2020

Read Colossians 3:12–4:1 in your Bible. I will print the Net–2 translation.

EXHORTATION TO UNITY AND LOVE

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others. 14 And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. 15 Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

EXHORTATION TO HOUSEHOLDS

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they will not become disheartened. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching—like those who are strictly people-pleasers—but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, 24 because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. Serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there are no exceptions.

CHAPTER 4

4:1 Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

COMMENTS:

Our reading today is divided into two distinct parts. Vs. 12–17 give directions on how to live together in community, the church on earth, our various congregations. Then vs. 3:18–4:1 we get advice on living together in families or households.

V. 12 begins with that significant word in Paul's writings, "Therefore." This word is short for: "Because of what God has done for you, this is what we should do to express our thanks and share God with everyone. We share with our family, our congregation, and our community.

Paul summarizes three things God has done for us. 1) He has chosen us from eternity as his elect so we receive his forgiveness. His forgiveness has made us holy. His gift of forgiveness is available because of his love.

Then he lays out seven ways for us to respond. 1) Clothe yourself with a merciful heart. 2. Practice kindness to all. 3) Be humble, don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think (cf. Romans 12:3). 4) Be gentle in all things. Walt Wangerin Jr. shared a story about a difficult time with his son. He just didn't obey.

Finally Wangerin resorted to a spanking. The son made a dramatic turn around. When asked why the spanking did the trick he said, it was not the spanking, it was his father crying after he had done so. The son did not want to disappoint his father like that again and bring him to tears. His tears were a sign of his gentleness which his son clearly saw.

5) Being patient (Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, Psalm 86:15) rather than explosive, also helps. 6) Bearing with one another is done because we know we are not perfect

either. I describe it as “putting up with one another,” because sometimes we need to have other put up with us.

7) Closely related to this is the practice of forgiveness. The most important reason for us to forgive is because we have been forgiven. Our gift of forgiveness of others is not because of their sorrow or apology. Forgiveness is always a gift and never earned.

Then in v. 14 we are reminded love is what holds all these virtues together. Whenever you are having trouble doing any of them, pause to meditate on the “peace of Christ.” I believe that when you realize how the “peace of Christ” has been poured over you, you will respond like Wangerin’s son and be able with God’s help to share the peace of God.

This is accomplished when we are in the Scriptures, participating in the sacraments, praying for God’s help to change, offering praise to God and do everything in the name and for the glory of Jesus, always giving thanks to God through Jesus.

Now we start the 2nd section with a frightening word: SUBMIT. I had more than one bride ask me to not use that word in the marriage ceremony. That led to many interesting discussions.

Notice it does not say, you have no rights, you are to cave into his every demand. The Bible says, “as is fitting in the Lord.” I ask you is it dangerous to submit to someone who really loves you and has your best interest at heart.

Our obedience to God as his children is a model for our children to see what pleasing God is like. I’m convinced at least 90% of parents when asked, “Why do I have to do so and so?” have told their children, “Because I said so, that’s why!” God’s corrective was to say to fathers, “Don’t provoke your children to wrath.” At least try to explain why it is a good thing to do.

The advice to slaves to obey their earthly masters is to remember we live all of our life, in many different circumstances, but in every position, honor God and bear witness for him. Don’t seek to be a people pleaser, be a God pleaser. You might have some tough and miserable days, but God will reward you in his time with your inheritance. It is an inheritance. It can’t be taken from you.

Those who continue to live life forgetting and ignoring God will receive their inheritance: punishment and separation. Notice how God always speaks to both parties: wife and husband, child and parents, slave and master. Slaves are to be treated with justice and fairness because each master has a master in heaven.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Our most common defense for doing something wrong to someone is that they said or did something to us. The bad behavior of others is never an excuse for us to behave badly, doing what we feel like doing rather than what God tells us to do. What other excuses do you make for your sins? Watch out for how the devil twists things to make your sin okay while everyone else who does that is wrong. Take time now to read and pray about two Bible verses: 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Galatians 6:1.