

Our Part of Change

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[0 : 00] If you would open your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3, we're going to stay a little bit in verses 1 through 4 and then progress through some of the verses all the way through verse 17.

I'm just trying to give an overview of the passage and hit some highlights with this and not dive too terribly deep into this. And so if you are there in the pew and you don't have a Bible, our Bible's right there.

You can turn to page 1,169 and 1,170 and you'll be right where I am. So Colossians 3, beginning in verse 1, I'm going to read 1 through 4, then I'm going to read verse 5, then I'm going to read verse 12, and then we'll pray together.

Beginning in verse 1, 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. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, which is idolatry.

[1 : 29] Verse 12, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Let's pray. Father, thank you. Thank you so much for your word. Thank you that by your spirit you inspired men to write, that we have your word before us.

And we pray that we would have our minds opened and illuminated by your Holy Spirit so that we might understand what your word says, that we would be empowered by your spirit to believe it and we would be empowered by your spirit to live it out.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So no one that I know of likes to be judged by a responsibility that was never theirs.

Or maybe some of you do. Some of you enjoy being judged by, okay, that's good, that's good. Because that's a tough thing. And when you have a household you grow up in that I did with my brothers.

[2 : 41] See, I knew my brother was going to be here today, so I was going to pick on him. My brothers and I, there are three of us. I have an older brother and a younger brother, and I am the neglected middle child.

We, every Saturday, had chores that we had to do. And it was not optional, and you were not paid for this except when you ate your food at the dinner table.

We had to dust, we had to vacuum, and we had to clean the bathrooms. We had three chores, three brothers, and my mother can find the dust on the bottom of a dresser.

You know what I'm saying? Like she was an excellent inspector, and when she came to inspect, I made sure, I don't know if they knew this, but I made sure that my mother knew which chore I had done, because I didn't want to take the blame for what somebody else had not done.

But really, I think that we just don't like to be judged for a responsibility that is not ours. And usually in the Christian life, though, we have an opposite problem.

[3 : 59] The opposite problem is that we have been taught in the Christian life that to live the Christian life is to adopt the idea of to let go and let God.

And it seems to absolve ourselves of some sort of responsibility for our own Christian growth. So what we want to look at in Colossians this morning is how Paul lays out the responsibility of growth, that God has his responsibility, but we also carry a responsibility.

And so I want us to see that, because it wasn't until probably 20, 25 years ago that I began to see this in Scripture, as someone was discipling me and helping me understand some things, that I began to realize there's some important things here that we need to see, that we read it, we hear it, but we don't really grasp what it's telling us.

And so this is like an introduction to the idea. And over the next few weeks, we'll dive a little more detail into some of these things. But I want us to look just broadly this morning at what is God's responsibility?

And then secondly, what is our responsibility? So God is responsible for what we talked about last week, right? It was Easter Sunday. We preached verses 1 through 4.

[5 : 19] We talked about how we are in Christ, and because we're in Christ, we need to do certain things. Paul was telling the Colossians who they were, and based on that, telling them what they needed to do.

It's what we call in English imperative and indicative. All right, so let's be sure everybody's awake. Everybody say indicative.

Indicative. And everybody say imperative. Imperative. Now, what indicative means is that that's a description of reality.

It's just like saying you're talented. You're beautiful. You're smart. You're always dependable. Sometimes you're not, but you're dependable.

You know what I'm saying? Like, it's just descriptions. It's just declarations about you. Whereas over here, it's shut the door. Turn off the light. Close the refrigerator.

[6 : 25] Slow down. It's commands. It's things that we tell people to do. The Bible, in the New Testament specifically, always speaks in this mode of telling us something about who we are before it tells us something we ought to do.

And it always connects what it tells us we need to do to who we are. Not understanding who we are then just gives us these commands that seem divorced from anything in reality that helps us.

And Paul, John, Peter, as they write their various epistles, they don't do that. They tell us who we are. And based upon who we are, this is how we ought to live.

And so as we looked at the first four verses, we talked about these four things that Paul said that the Colossians were. They were united with Christ in his death.

They were united with Christ in his resurrection. They were united with Christ being hidden with Christ in God, which I think means that he's seated there upon the throne with him.

[7 : 36] And that we are united with him in his second coming, describing who we are. And that this is a power. However, we have a power to live the Christian life because we have a real, vital, spiritual connection to Jesus Christ.

Now, how does this vital connection to Jesus Christ work? Well, let me give a little example. You'll remember Peter, the apostle. He was the impulsive one.

He's the one who wanted to walk on water but couldn't keep his eyes upon Jesus. He's the one who cut off the high priest's servant ear. He's the one who swore to Jesus that he would never betray him or deny him.

And yet we know that he did deny. And so that's how we see him in the Gospels. But when you get to the book of Acts, what do you see in Peter?

You see that God uses him to preach the sermon at Pentecost. God gives him courage to preach the truth, even though the governing authorities tell him to stop it. God uses him to reach the first Gentile converts.

[8 : 45] God uses him to write even two New Testament books. But what we don't see is we don't see any transfer of power. We don't see any lightning bolts.

We don't see any auras. We don't see any EMP surges. We just see a guy doing what God told him to do. And the moment that he is obedient to the Lord, the Lord empowers him to do it.

As a matter of fact, the Lord empowers him in two ways. He gives him the desire and the ability to do it. That's what we see.

I hope that that begins to kind of ring a little bit, because it's what the passage of Scripture that was during our Scripture video was saying.

Philippians 2, 12 through 13. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

[9 : 47] Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Verse 12, Paul is telling them, you need to work out your salvation, which means grow in Christ. Right?

It means stop being a baby Christian and become a mature Christian. That's what this working out your salvation means. And then he tells them something fascinating in verse 13. For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work.

To will and to work. It is God's responsibility, by his power in you, and by your being united with Christ, for him to give you the will and the work, the desire and the ability to be obedient to the Lord.

If you're going to grow in your Christian life, and you see something in Scripture that you're saying, listen, Christ says, I need to do this. I need to love one another. I need to forgive one another.

Then when you go to obey that, all of the desire to obey that, all the power and ability to obey that, did not come from you, but came from the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 59] That's how it works. A little bit ephemeral. I can't really grab a hold of it and see it. It's a little bit like nutrients from your food. Nutrients go into your body and they work.

I'm told that they do good things to you. I have a hard time believing it. But it's true, they say, that you shouldn't eat these bad things, but you should eat these things that have these vitamins and these minerals in them because they're good for you.

Right? But I can't feel it working. I can't see it working. Maybe over the long haul, after I've been doing it for a while.

But imagine if you treated your food the way that we treat Christ working in us. We think to ourselves, I'm going to be obedient. It's like, you know, I didn't feel anything.

It's like, well, I ate broccoli and I certainly didn't feel anything. I'm never eating broccoli again. But that's not how it works. Christ is at work in us and this is not something for us to try to find some sort of physical manifestation and feeling about it so that we know it's true.

[12 : 11] The truth of the matter is this. He promises to empower us to live a holy life. Therefore, our task is to just believe it. You just got to believe that when you see something in Scripture that He tells you as a Christian, hey, you need to be obedient to me.

You need to forgive one another. You need to love one another. You need to bear one another's burdens. You need to not lie to one another. You need to, you know, all of these things you could line out. When you see that and you feel convicted and you say, I need to be obedient to the Lord, then the desire to be obedient didn't come from you.

It came from God. And your ability to do that thing didn't come from you. It came from God. And you got to believe that He is going to work within you.

And that ought to give you great courage, great comfort. Because listen, husbands, as you go to love your wife as Christ loved this church, as you all seek to tell the truth to one another, as you raise your kids in the instruction and the admonition of the Lord, or you do as Philippians 2.14 says, to do all things without grumbling or complaining, or as you seek to love one another, as you seek to bear one another's burdens, as you try to seek the Lord and His kingdom first, all of that desire and ability has come from the Lord to empower you to do this by your union with Christ.

And so this is God's responsibility in you and in your Christian life. You don't have to bring the power to the relationship. You just got to bring the availability.

[13 : 56] You just got to bring the availability. It is Christ, by our union with Him, who empowers us to live this Christian life.

So you got to trust God, and you got to trust Him on His timing, and you got to wait. And not only does that mean about your life, but some of you, maybe as a husband, you're trying to disciple your wife, or maybe as parents, you're trying to disciple your kids, or maybe you've got somebody you're trying to read the Scriptures with, and you want to see them grow in their faith, the power for them to grow is not in them, but it's in their connection to Christ.

And so that means that you may have someone that you're trying to disciple. You've been praying for them for years. You've been sharing with them word after word after word, trying to encourage them, and you feel like you look at them, you kind of go like, why are you so slow?

Why are you not getting this? Why is it that you're still the way you've always been? It's because God and His timing is working in them in His timing, not yours.

The power for them to grow in their faith is not because you told them so, but because of their union with Christ.

[15 : 16] And if someone's not a Christian, then they will never have this power working in them to grow as a Christian until they humble themselves and submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And the truth of the matter is, is that without this, you are separated from Christ. You're separated from the life that is in God. And you cannot on your own, willy-nilly come, just whenever you want to come, but you will come when He calls.

And so the question is, is He calling you today to come to Him for salvation? This is God's part. This is what God is responsible for. God is responsible to bring the power, to bring the desire, so we can grow.

That leads to the second part, and that is, what is our responsibility? Now, just reviewing kind of last week's sermon, verse 1 told us that we're to seek the things that are above.

Verse 2 told us to set our minds on things that are above and not on things that are on earth. And so we ended up with this idea of a positive and a negative. There's some things that we should avoid and some things that we should go hard after, right, and do.

[16 : 36] These are things we should be involved in. And the Bible describes this as a put off and put on. Put off and put on.

We're to put off certain things. We're to put on other things. Another way the Bible describes it is we're to kill the old man and live in the new man.

We're to put off the old sin and we're to put on the new life in Christ. Let me just say it this way. A couple of things before I dive into that. One, this means that if you're a Christian, you should always be actively pursuing to kill your old man, to kill your old ways, to kill your sin, to put off the old man, put off the old habits, and to put on new habits.

Christians, Christians should never break habits. Christians should always exchange habits. You shouldn't just stop doing a thing without putting something else in its place.

Paul talks about this in verse 5 through 17. And what he does is that in verse 5 through 11, he talks about things that need to be put off. Right?

[17 : 56] You can see in verse 5 where he says, put to death these things. And he says things that talk about things that are in the heart. Things like impurity, passion, desire, covetousness, anger, wrath.

But he also talks about external things. Right? He talks about things like sexual immorality, idolatry, slander, obscene talk, lying. Paul is saying that a Christian needs to put these things off.

He does not need to have this as a part of his life. The Christian has the responsibility to kill these things in his life. As a matter of fact, Paul has described this kind of stuff as a law that's within us.

Now hang with me here for just a second. We're going to run over to Romans chapter 7 where Paul says the same thing. And then let me see if I can help you understand what he's saying here. In verse 21 of chapter 7, he says, So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

Does anybody feel that? You want to do right, but evil lies close at hand. Verse 22, For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. Verse 23, But I see in my members another law, waging war against the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

[19 : 20] A law is something you're bound to obey. A law is something you're bound to obey. So let's see if we can illustrate this in another way that might help us understand this law of sin.

This law of sin. What is this law of sin? I want you to think about gravity for just a second. How many of you think that you are not subject to gravity? Nobody raised their hand.

Because we all know we're subject to gravity. The law of gravity is something that you're subject to. You know that if you get on the building and jump off, you're not going to just float.

You're going to fall. The law of gravity is there, and it helps me to know that if I trip, I'm going to fall. But what if somebody could come along and said to you, you are no longer bound by the law of gravity?

What if somebody could come to you right now and say to you, you're free from the law of gravity? The law of gravity no longer has sway over you. You do not have to listen to, follow, or obey the law of gravity ever again.

[20 : 30] Now, first, you would think that they're crazy, right? Then you would think, oh, well, yeah, you're just going to give me a plane or something like that, or maybe it's a hot air balloon, or you're going to give me some other kind of thing.

But no, they say you're no longer subject to the law of gravity. Can you imagine what life would be like if you weren't subject to the law of gravity? Do you know how many times I trip?

I have the worst problem in the world because my big toes love to drag the ground. Do you know what I'm saying? You're walking along and you just stubble it like that, and then I trip and almost fall.

If I wasn't subject to the law of gravity, I wouldn't fall. That sounds kind of nice, because when I see people fall, it hurts. Imagine if you're not subject to the law of sin.

Imagine if that law might be in you, still trying to affect you, but you're no longer subject to it. You see, when you were not a Christian, you were subject to that law in such a way that that's all you could do.

[21 : 45] But when you became a Christian, you had a new law in you. And now, you can choose between, do I follow the law of sin, or do I follow the law of God?

You see, what happens to us as Christians, when we become Christians, there remains in us sin. I like to think of this sin like a guerrilla warrior that likes to hide and find ways to trip us up.

He likes to find ways to attack us. And this is why you can become a Christian, and you can have this certain sin struggle. You can get through this certain sin struggle, think it's in your past, and then when you get a little bit older, all of a sudden, it rears its ugly head and comes after you again.

And you think to yourself, wait a minute, I thought that I had defeated that years ago when I first became a Christian. Why am I struggling with it again? It's because sin hides within you and waits for the right moment to ambush you and come out of you to tempt you to sin.

What Paul is saying is, listen, this sin that is in you, all these things are in you, put it to death. Get rid of it. And then in verse 12, he says, put on these things.

[23 : 12] Put these things in place of those things. Because, you know, if you lose the law of gravity, you're going to have to have some ways not to float out into space.

Or if you float out in space, then all of a sudden, you've got to have some different lungs and maybe a different composition to your body so that you don't freeze to death out there, right? If I'm going to have no law of gravity, then maybe I need to have some sort of protective skin layer so I can get through the atmosphere without burning up.

You know, something else has got to come in place. I can't just get rid of that law without another law, without something else. And that's what Paul is saying. He said, listen, you can't just say no to sin without saying yes to something else.

Let me give an example from Ephesians. In Ephesians 4, verse 25, Paul says this. He says, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor.

He's not just saying stop lying, you bunch of liars. He's saying stop speaking lies. Start speaking truth.

[24 : 17] You have to put off the old man. You have to put on the new man. And so what Paul is doing is that in verses 5 through 11, he's telling us the things that we need to not set our minds on.

And in verse 12 through 17, he's telling us the things we need to set our minds on. So then what does this mean for us? It means this.

Our responsibility in growing as a Christian is to replace sinful habits, thoughts, attitudes, and actions with biblical habits, thoughts, attitudes, and actions.

That's our responsibility. It's God's responsibility to empower us to do that. It's God's responsibility to empower us to want to do that. But it's our responsibility to put to death and to put on.

So how do we do that? Well, in the coming weeks, I'm going to give you some more details about how that works more specifically. But today, I just want to back up and give you three big picture ideas to help you think through this.

[25 : 32] And from this, maybe you can find a way forward. Let me give you these three things and then we're going to have a time of response. The first thing is this.

You must learn to love God's law. You must learn to love God's law.

Too often, God's law is downplayed, thought of some nasty, negative, terrible thing that should not be submitted to because then it would turn us into Pharisees.

That's our problem. But remember Paul's statement in Romans chapter 7, verse 22. He says, For I delight in the law of God in my inner being.

Paul, the apostle of grace, the apostle who once was a legalist, who says we shouldn't be legalists, is the one who says he delights in the law of God in his inner being.

[26 : 43] You cannot grow as a Christian trying to put off and put on if you disparage the law of God and kick it to the side as though it's something that doesn't apply to you.

Yes, it has to be properly interpreted. Yes, it has to be put into his place. But you can't just throw it out. As a matter of fact, Paul's words here, For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, I think he's quoting from Psalm 1, verse 2, that talks about the man who's successful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

We don't want to become legalists. We don't want to become Pharisees. We don't want to be people who are trying to work some way in order to please God and get something from him.

Our relationship with God is not transactional. I do this, God does this. I do this, God does this. That's not our relationship with God. Our relationship with him is that he is our father.

We are saved. We've been rescued. We've been redeemed. We are sanctified. We are justified. We are fully his. We're united with him and he gives power to us to live in a way that he wants us to live, and his law shows us what to do.

[28 : 04] So we need to learn to love the law of God. The second thing we need to do is we need a humility that's willing to take the credit for our sin and our sinful desires.

We need a humility that's willing to take the credit for our sin and our sinful desires. If I were to ask you if you were a good person, would you say yes?

I think most of us would. And when we begin to think about sin that we commit, most of us have a tendency to shift the blame of that sin over to someone else.

Look, I know I was unkind, but that's because you were unkind to me first. You know what? I wouldn't be so unkind to you if you didn't do such ridiculous things.

You made me mad. All of these are ways where we won't accept the credit for our sin.

[29 : 25] Not even if the person who's ugly to you and sins against you would be Emperor Nero himself, can you escape from the fact that you must own your own sin.

If you cannot own your own sin, then how are you going to grow? Because it's your sin that has to be put aside. It's your sin that has to be put to death.

You can't put anything to death if you think you have no sin or if you think your sin is partly somebody else's fault. James tells us where sin comes from.

He says, let no one say when he is tempted I'm being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires.

Third truth and then we're done. In order to fight against the sin, in order to put aside the old man, put on the new man, you must be part of a local body of Christ.

[30 : 35] You must commit yourself to a local body and they must commit themselves to you. You cannot just float out there as a Christian unmoored to a local body because the ways of fighting sin happens in the plural with other people.

The problem is is that as a church, not just this church, but so many churches, we're afraid to open up and talk about the things that we're struggling with. We're afraid to say that I have a sin issue.

We're afraid to be transparent and say, I really struggle with this issue because we're afraid we're going to become the talk of the town. We're afraid that somebody's going to take what we're struggling with and share it with someone else as a good-natured prayer request that ends up all over the place.

But all through Colossians 3, 1 through 17, notice he uses and makes reference to this local body of Christ. He uses the plural you all over.

It's you all. If he were southern, he would say y'all, right? All over this chapter. He's talking about these sins as they are taking place to one another, like verse 9.

[31 : 47] He talks about the various parties in verse 11, the slave and the free, showing that your ethnicity has nothing to do with whether or not you're a sinner or you're in Christ.

He wants there to be perfect harmony and we're called one body and we're called to admonish one another in this section of Scripture. You cannot fight successfully against your own sin apart from the local body of Christ.

You need to be committed to them and they need to be committed to you. And I want you to think about this. Those of you who've been members of First Baptist Church for years, when anybody new comes along, it's your responsibility to be committed to them, to help them fight against their sin, to help them grow in Christ and not to just be a number on a page that says, look, we've grown.

They're your brother and sister in Christ and they need you to adopt them and they need you to take them under your wing and they need you to help them and pray for them and love them and show hospitality to them and be involved in their lives.

But we're afraid to be involved in one another's lives because we're afraid somebody's going to say something to someone else about what we're doing. You don't have to be afraid.

[33 : 05] The truth is is that you're all a bunch of wicked sinners. You like that? The truth will set you free.

Listen, as Paul said in his letters, I am the chief of sinners. And we can't grow in our Christian life if we don't come to the place of saying, I am a wicked sinner.

I need my brothers and sisters in Christ. Listen, I mean, I get up here and I preach and I study and do all kinds of things, whatever, but like I can't do any of this if you're not praying for me, if you're not holding me accountable, if you're not checking in on me, I can't do it.

And I'm not the greatest example of how this is to be done. I'm still trying to figure this out, you know, like trying to learn how to love people. I'm not sure I love very well. I'm not sure that I love very well at all.

I want to love. I want to love more and I find myself sometimes going like, how can we show love to one another the way Christ would want us to? Well, I can't do it if we're not together.

[34 : 19] And so, Christians, today, let me, let me encourage you to commit yourself to Christ today.

To ask Him for the desire and the ability to fight against your sin. Ask Him for a heart for His law, a humility towards your sin and a love for the local church.

and would you spend time praying for your brothers and your sisters in Christ? One of the reasons that we partake even of the Lord's Supper is that it is something to be done not in isolation of the body, but it's something that's given for the whole body.

It's something we're all doing together. And so, even today, as we come down to the table and we're all taking this and we're taking the bread and we're taking the juice, we do that not only because it preaches the gospel to us, but it also preaches the gospel to one another.

So, Christian, I call you to just commit yourself to Christ. Commit yourself to fighting against your sin. And leaning upon your brothers and sisters to do so.

[35 : 45] Thank you.