

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCTOBER 12 - 16, 2020

Above All

8.30 - 11.22

BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



MONDAY

Colossians 3:1-2; John 11:17-18; Genesis 45:4-8

Perhaps you've heard the criticism, "That person is so heavenly-minded that that they're no earthly good!" Colossians 3:2 seems aligned: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Jesus, however, asked the Father to keep His disciples safe and faithful, but "not ... [to] take them out of the world" (John 11:14-15).

Some Christians apparently misinterpret Colossians 3:2, incorporating misapplication of predestination and/or the church's "rapture" to withdraw into a "Christian bubble." Their logic: "If God has predetermined whom He's called, why bother with evangelizing—it won't matter anyway." Or, "If Jesus is returning and sparing us the Tribulation, let's just disconnect from this evil world and wait." Such orientations are not biblical nor earthly good, rejecting Jesus' teaching to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Joseph didn't default to escapism, though he could have wallowed in self-pity. Sold to slavery by envious brothers, falsely accused and subsequently imprisoned, Joseph rose to the #2 position in Egypt, the world's then-leading empire. Joseph subsequently saved his family and nearby nations from famine. Daniel similarly rejected compromise amidst Babylonian captivity. He prospered despite others' wicked schemes and, like Joseph, reached high office in the world's leading empire—also while faithfully glorifying God.

“A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism ... but [what] a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. ... The Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next—[for example] the Apostles ... [and] English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade. ... Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither.” (C.S. Lewis)

Have you learned how to be “in the world while not of it,” reflecting God’s glorious light to a fallen world? Don’t hide it—help others see that “*the kingdom of God is at hand*” (Mark 1:15)!

QUESTIONS

How do some Christians misapply being “heavenly-minded”? How did Joseph and Daniel exemplify being “in the world while not of it”? What did Jesus mean when declaring, “*The kingdom of God is at hand*” (Mark 1:15)?

PRAYERS FOR HOMEWORK HOUSE

Pray for the school-based program Think Together as they open up opportunities for limited numbers of Azusa students to do their distance learning on site. Pray for their selection process as they are prioritizing the children of first responders. Pray for the on-going safety of this learning opportunity for students.

TUESDAY

Colossians 3:3-10; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Psalm 51:7-12

In most non-Christian religions, faith or “spiritual” schemes, the concept of “god” or divinity is impersonal. Some submit even to created things or science, some to a “life force” and others to selfish worldly pursuits. In Christianity, God is deeply personal—so much so that He came to earth to join us in our trouble, do the work necessary for reconciliation with Him, and provide the Way to eternal relationship and salvation.

In today’s 1 Corinthians 15 passage, Paul gives Jesus several unique names: “*the last Adam*” (v. 45); “*the second Man*” (v. 46); and “*the Man of heaven*” (vv. 47-49). These reinforce how personally God takes our fallen plight. He came on a rescue mission from heaven as a Man, Jesus of Nazareth—“*the last Adam*”—to undo the curse invoked by the original Adam’s rebellion (Genesis 3). The Son is “*the Way, the Truth and the Life*” (John 14:6)—not only providing the only Way to salvation, but also exemplifying and teaching us how to walk in this Way.

Today’s Colossians 3 text characterizes what personal, right relationship with God entails: “*your life is hidden with Christ*” (v. 3); “*Christ who is your life*” (v. 4); and “*the new self ... being renewed ... after the image of its Creator*” (v. 10). How can we be any closer? Such intimacy profoundly impacts our earthly lives as Christians, as Paul reinforces.

Per Colossians 3:3, we “have died.” “When [the believer] first repented and believed, he/she died with Christ, [which] was represented in ... baptism [thereafter] dead to the world and ... its aims and purposes. ... [We now belong] to Heaven.” (Peter Pett) Verses 9-10 reference “the old self” and “new self,” provoking a question: “If the Christian died with Christ, why is [their] ‘old self’ still active? ... [We are] being perfected in Christ. ... The [person] that you were ... came under sentence of death. ... While the ‘old self’ lingers on, you are to treat [it] as dead and buried with Christ.” (Pett)

“God’s plan is to restore His image in us.” (David Guzik) Jesus’ related illustration of an intimate Christian relationship is: “I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20).

QUESTIONS

Why is it important to understand the true and living God as personal? What did Paul mean when penning “*your life is hidden with Christ*” (Colossians 3:3)? How have we, as believers, “died” already?

PRAYERS FOR HOMEWORK HOUSE

Pray for Azusa’s first responders and essential workers. We think of both Azusa Police and Fire Departments, LA County Sheriffs, EMT, and other paramedic services whose jobs might be especially challenging during COVID. Pray also for Azusa residents who might serve in other communities as police officers, firefighters, sheriffs, EMTs, paramedics or hospital staff members. Pray for their stamina and safety in this season.

WEDNESDAY

Colossians 3:5-9; Romans 7:12-25

Today's Colossians text reads almost like part of a religious legalist's manifesto, or perhaps the dualistic philosophy of Plato ("everything physical is bad; only the spiritual and immaterial are virtuous"): "*Put to death ... what is earthly*" (3:5), etc. Though extreme overemphasis here is problematic—ancient Gnosticism misapplied this to corrupt theology and earned Paul's rebukes throughout his epistles—"earthliness" is a problem plaguing all. How do we reconcile striving with the sins of Colossians 3:5-9—evil desire, covetousness, slander, etc.—and our spiritual rebirth in Christ and aim to glorify God?

Although I've followed Christ for 25+ years, anyone spending an average day with me will likely get ample evidence regarding my fallenness. Like you, and everyone else, I am a "recovering human" wrestling with selfish, fallen inclinations. Paul shares even his own related battles in Romans 7.

The Bible instructs every believer to "*watch over your heart*" (Proverbs 4:23), "*taking every thought captive*" (2 Corinthians 10:5), and "*set no worthless thing before [your] eyes*" (Psalm 101:3). We are told to dwell on things "*true ... honorable ... just ... pure... lovely ... [and] worthy of praise*" (Philippians 4:8). Should temptation confront us—like Joseph encountering Potiphar's forward, provocative wife (Genesis 39)—flee and take the "*way of escape*" that God provides (1 Corinthians 10:13). Ask God, our "*fortress...[and] stronghold*" (Psalm 18:2), for protection and direction in such situations.

A secular story shares harmonious truth. An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he revealed. “It is a terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil—filled with anger, envy, greed, arrogance, self-pity, resentment, lies, pride, superiority and ego.” The grandfather continued, “The other wolf is good—he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The same fight is going on inside you—and everyone else.” The grandson pondered, then asked, “Grandpa, which wolf wins?” The old man answered, “The one I feed.”

How can you “*Put to death ... what is earthly*”? Do you guard your heart, considering good things and avoiding evil influences? When temptation arises, do you flee virtuously? Which “wolf” do you “feed”? Ask for God’s help here.

QUESTIONS

Why is it important for you to “*watch over your heart*” (Proverbs 4:23) and how should you, as a believer, do so? How is Joseph a godly example of wisdom when confronted with temptation? Which “wolf” is presently “winning” in your life?

PRAYERS FOR HOMEWORK HOUSE

Pray for local agencies providing for the material resources of community members. Many of these local agencies have been inundated with needs of the community since the onset of COVID; in particular, Shepherd’s Pantry along with other existing food banks.

THURSDAY

Colossians 3:6; Nahum 1:2-6

“*The wrath of God is coming*” (Colossians 3:6). This is not the crazed proclamation of a wild-eyed fanatic, but a sober scriptural alarm. Such warning defies an “all dogs go to heaven” outlook with its sentimental “Santa Claus god”—one holding no one accountable nor judging evil. It feels closer to the “mean, vengeful traffic cop god” who delights in issuing damnation tickets, the misunderstood God ignorantly rejected by others. The Bible professes that “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8)—how can this truth coexist with Colossians 3:6?

“God’s wrath is His holy hatred of ... everything that is unrighteous. ... God’s wrath is not uncontrollable rage, indictive bitterness, [or] God losing His temper. In fact ... God is “slow to anger” (Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:8). ... Wrath is God’s ‘natural’ response to sin in the universe. He cannot overlook it ... [nor] stand by indifferently while His creation is destroyed (by sin). ... [God] cannot dismiss lightly those who trample His holy will ... [nor] wink when [people] mock His name.” (Ray Pritchard)

God’s wrath harmonizes with His love. He hates and judges those things—evil in its various forms—which destroy His beloved: “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). I believe this love partly explains Jesus’ lament upon departing the Mount of Olives after the Triumphal Entry: “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ...*” (Matthew 23:37). It also clarifies the Bible’s shortest verse—just before raising Lazarus, “*Jesus wept*” (John 11:35).

God is not volatile and impulsive, as many people can be. “God’s wrath is His settled hostility toward sin.” (Pritchard) It can show up in His stepping back and permitting hardened rebels to wreck themselves. “In part, the wrath of God comes as God allows [people] to continue in sinful—and therefore self-destructive—behavior (Romans 1:24-32).” (Guzik)

Contrary to sentimental views, God is not “soft on crime.” In His holiness and love, He judges sin. God also declares, however, “*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*” (Ezekiel 33:11). Hell is a real place, though designed not for people but “*for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41). “*Choose life*” (Deuteronomy 30:19)—give God no cause for wrath and help others do the same!

QUESTIONS

How can we reconcile “*the wrath of God is coming*” (Colossians 3:6) with “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8)? What is God’s “wrath” and how does it differ from most people’s wrath?

PRAYERS FOR HOMEWORK HOUSE

Pray for Azusa residents who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19; in particular, those who are immunocompromised or have a comorbidity where they are at greater risk. Pray for their mental health as many have likely been isolating for over six months.

FRIDAY

Colossians 3:11; Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Luke 10:25-37

Colossians 3:11 is very topical, reinforcing that all people—made equally in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27)—have unity in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12). This sets the table for social justice. “The Bible promotes impartiality (James 2:1), ... concern for those who are oppressed (Zechariah 7:10; Proverbs 28:16), and fair treatment of the weak or poor (James 1:27; Proverbs 14:1).” (GotQuestions?org)

“Love must govern every action we take (1 Corinthians 16:14), and (racial) prejudice is opposed to love ... [having] no place in the heart of a believer in Christ. Our lives are to be ruled by humility, obedience, and love for God and others (Romans 13:7-9). Prejudice violates all three.” (GotQuestions?org)

“Jesus summed up all the laws of God into two ‘great commandments’ (Matthew 22:36-40). The second is to love our neighbor as we do ourselves. When ... asked to define love of neighbor, [Jesus] depicts someone who, at great risk and sacrifice, meets the physical and material needs of a man of a different race and religion from Himself (Luke 10:25-37).” (Tim Keller)

“Biblical teaching [opposes] racism and oppression. ... Scripture places obligations on Christians to [contest] systemic racism.” (GotQuestions?org) “The Bible speaks of both individual and corporate sin, guilt, and responsibility. Western people, and especially white Americans, feel no responsibility for wrongdoing as long as they

have not done it personally. ... The Bible supports the idea that there are such things as unjust social structures ... [and] does not reduce poverty and injustice solely to ... individual actions. ... The biblical view of justice gives full weight to both personal responsibility and social structures.” (Keller)

An eighty-something brother recently shared, “I’m beginning to understand all of the opportunities I’ve had as a white man growing up in America. I’d been among people of different backgrounds since youth, always getting along well. However, I now see the advantages I’ve experienced.” Recent events have awakened me similarly. The takeaway is not, “Beat yourself up if you are white” but, rather, “Understand that you’ve been privileged. Go forward loving the disadvantaged; commit to making our social structures and methods equitable.” Jesus was not white. Yet this is what He would do, what He died for.

QUESTIONS

How is social injustice completely opposite of what the Bible teaches and emphasizes? Should “white” people be ashamed of their “whiteness”? What responsibility do we have for unjust social structures?

PRAYERS FOR HOMEWORK HOUSE

Pray for Azusa schools: for teachers, principals, and other staff members at these schools; for school leaders as they support students participating in distance learning; for the PTA and other parents involved in these schools as they continue to lead their children’s schools virtually. Ultimately, pray for the students at these schools that they might be equipped to thrive.

Sources:

- C.S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *Mere Christianity*; publisher Geoffrey Bles (UK), Macmillan Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers (US), 1952.
- Peter Pett's quotes can be found at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/colossians-3.html>
- David Guzik's quotes are from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/colossians-3/>
- The paraphrased "Two Wolves" story can be found at <https://deanyeong.com/fight-two-wolves-inside/>
- Ray Pritchard's quote is from <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/a-forgotten-doctrine-the-wrath-of-god/>
- GotQuestions.org quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/systemic-racism.html> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-prejudice.html>
- Tim Keller's quotes are from his article, "The Sin of Racism," which can be found at <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/the-sin-of-racism/>



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave. Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833

www.glenkirkchurch.org |  @GlenkirkChurch |  Facebook: GlenkirkChurch